



New Researches on the Religion and Mythology of the Pagan Slavs

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The Mythological Serpent Fighting Motif in the Russian Primary Chronicle, Epic Poetry and Fairy Tales

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Abstract. Duel between a young warrior and a gigantic enemy is a widespread motive in the world literature and folklore, but only the single combat between a young Russian and a giant Pecheneg warrior in the Russian Primary chronicle has its folklore version in the tale “Nikita Kožemjaka and the Serpent”. Both stories have many parallels in Russian fairytales and epic poetry, which hero (Dobrynja, Ivan) enters into the struggle with a chthonic monster, Fiery Serpent (*Zmej Gorynyč*) or Outlandish Marvel (*Čudo Yudo*). The single-combat stories contain several mythological motifs considered in this article.

Serpent with several heads is a quite common figure in fairy folktales. The Russian word *Zmej* is akin to *zemlja* (‘earth’), and water characteristics of the monster brings him closer to the Vedic serpent Vritra, the shutter of the waters. *Zmej*-serpent has the patronymic ‘Gorynyč’ with the allusion to mountain (*gora*) or to his ability spewing fire (*goret’* – to burn). The flying Serpent symbolizes hostile danger, he abducts women or girls, and the serpent-slayer saves the Russian country from this disgraceful tribute. The winner of *Zmej*, *Kožemjaka* or *Dobrynja*, is similar to Vedic Indra or Greco-Roman Hercules.

The Russian serpent-slayer does not marry the saved princess, who symbolizes the country or sovereignty, because she is the bride of somebody else (Prince Vladimir etc.). Their relations are determined by the basic myth, in which the adversaries, Hero and *Zmej*, act as substitutes of the storm-god *Perunъ* and the chthonian god *Velesъ*. However, *Perunъ* is not the main opponent of *Velesъ*, who does not approve the marriage between Mother Earth and Sky-

god (*Dažbog* from Indo-European **deiuo*-). *Perunъ* only represents *Dažbog*, as *Zmej* is the stand-in of *Velesъ*.

The motive of ploughing has two allusions in epic poetry. First, the ploughing by a 'wonderful plowman', like *Mikula Seljaninovič*, creates the cultural space and fertilizes Mother Earth in her sacred marriage with Sky-god. A competition between the giant plowman and Hero-nobleman shows the latter's secondary place in the world. Second, the joint ploughing by Hero and Serpent draws the furrow as a border separating the cultural space and the Netherworld. The ploughing is similar to the digging of river beds by the Vedic god *Indra*, who defeated the 'great serpent' *Vritra*.

The many-headed serpent-like monster arrives from over a water boundary with the chthonic world, depicted as the fiery *Smorodina* river. The fairy Hero meets his adversary on the incandescent bridge over the fiery river, which water is similar to flames. Fairytales depict the chthonic monster as Outlandish Marvel (*Čudo Yudo*), which is associated with the gods *Triglav* and *Černobog*, venerated by the Western Slavs.

The hero's nickname *Tanner* (*Kožemjaka*) has parallels in the fairytales of *Ivan the Bull / Cow's son*, who fights the many-headed monster *Čudo Yudo* on the bridge to the Netherworld. The heroes are similar to the Vedic god *Indra*, who also was a cow's son, and the Old-Russian chthonic god *Velesъ* was the protector of cattle, as the 'bull' god *Varuṇa*. Cattle was the main value and symbol of prosperity in the ancient Indo-European culture, and worshiping of bulls and cows was common among the Slavs and their nobility in the ninth and tenth centuries.

The victory over the chthonic Serpent by young *Nikita Kožemjaka*, *Dobrynja Nikitič*, *Aljoša Popovič* and the fairytale *Ivan* (his mother's son) reflects the mythology of age initiation rites. Youth initiation was interpreted in folklore as communication with the Netherworld, and the initiated adolescents were obliged to repeat the feat of the primordial hero in order to liberate themselves from the Serpent-kingdom. Being educated by the Serpent, they played the role of the Serpent-slayer. Their obligation to marry after the initiation completing is depicted as the rescue of a girl (princess) from the Serpent. The initiation rituals were still alive in the ninth and tenth centuries, and folklore and epic poetry (*byliny*) used the main feat of neophytes to depict the struggle of the growing Russian state against its external enemies

Keywords. Russian Primary chronicle, *bylina*, fairy tale, *Zmej Gorynyč*, *Čudo Yudo*, *Nikita the Tanner*, *Dobrynja Nikitič*, *Aljoša Popovič*, initiation rite, mythology.

“**T**he year AM 6500 (992). Vladimir attacked the Croats. When he had returned from the Croatian War, the Pechenegs arrived on the opposite side of the Dnieper from the direction of the Sula¹. Vladimir set forth against them, and encountered them on the banks of the Trubezh, where Perejaslavl’ now stands. Vladimir took up his position on the near side, and the Pechenegs theirs on the other, and the Russes did not venture to the farther shore any more than their foes did to this side of the river. The Prince of the Pechenegs came down to the river bank, and calling to Vladimir, proposed to him, “Send one of your warriors, and I will detail one of mine, that they may do battle together. If your man conquers mine, let us not fight together for three years to come. But if our champion wins, let us fight three years in succession.” Then each prince returned to his own force.

Vladimir returned to his camp, and sent heralds through it to inquire whether there was any man who would fight with the champion of the Pechenegs. But none was found anywhere. On the morrow, the Pechenegs arrived, bringing their champion; but on our side there was none. Vladimir now began to be concerned as he sought a champion throughout his whole army. Then there came to the Prince an old man who said to him, “Oh Prince, I have a younger son at home. I came forth with four others, but he abides by the hearth. Since his childhood, there has been no man who could vanquish him. One day when I reprimanded him while he was tanning a hide, he flew into a rage at me and tore the leather to bits in his hands.” When the Prince heard these words, he rejoiced, and summoned the youth. So he was brought before the Prince, and the Prince informed him of all that had occurred. Then the youth said, “Oh Prince, I know not whether I be capable of this feat; wherefore let them test me. Is there no large and strong bull hereabouts?” Such a bull was soon found, and he directed them to anger the animal. The men put hot irons on him, and then let him go. The bull ran past the youth, and he seized the beast’s flank with his hand. He thus pulled off the skin along with as much flesh as he could grasp. Then Vladimir remarked, “You are well qualified to do combat with the champion”.

On the morrow the Pechenegs approached, and began to shout, “Is there no champion present? See, ours is ready”. Vladimir had given orders that night to rest upon their arms, and at dawn the two champions went forth. The Pechenegs had sent out their man, who was gigantic and fearsome. Vladimir sent forward

1. I am deeply indebted to Patrice Lajoye and Stamatis Zochios for their valuable comments to an early version of this article. All remaining shortcomings are to my account.

his champion, and when the Pecheneg saw him, he laughed, for he was of but moderate size. A space was duly measured off between the two armies, and the warriors were allowed to attack each other. They came to grips, and seized upon each other with violence. But the Russ crushed the Pecheneg to death in his arms, and cast him upon the ground. The Russes raised a cheer, and the Pechenegs took to flight. The Russes pursued them, cut them down, and drove them away. In his joy, Vladimir founded a city on this river bank, and called it Perejaslavl', because this youth had won glory there. Vladimir made him and his father great men, and then returned to Kiev with victory and renown."²

This story became a symbol of both the fighting of the Russian state against the steppe nations and the decisive role of the ordinary people in this struggle. In scholarship the episode has often been considered as entirely modeled after the Biblical story about the victory of a modest shepherdess David over the Philistine enormous warrior Goliath (1 Samuel 17:1)³. It seems to shed light on the method of working of the compiler, who embellished the early chronicle's short entries with fictions gleaned from the Old Testament, church history, Byzantine traditions, or from his own imagination. Indeed, the single combat is a popular topic in early narratives⁴. There are many similar stories about the duel, in which a native fighter with average physical options overcomes an enormous enemy warrior. For instance, Livy (*Ab urbe condita* VII. 26. 1-5) refers to the similar single combat between the Roman youngster Marcus Valerius Corvus (who later became the five-time consul) and a gigantic Gallic warrior in 348 BC. During the fighting, the Celtic goddess of war, Morrigan, taking image of a crow, helped the Roman hero to win the competition. Under the year 1022, the Primary Chronicle refers to the act of bravery of the Prince Mstislav, one of the sons of Vladimir the Great. Mstislav with his forces attacked a tribe known as Kasogians. When the two armies faced each other, the Prince of the Kasogians, Rededja, proposed a single combat between the two leaders, the winner to receive all the possessions of the other. Mstislav agreed to this and, at Rededja's suggestion, the contest was to be by wrestling and weapons were not to be used. After some time, "Mstislav began to tire, for Rededja was large and strong". However, he made a last effort, threw Rededja to the ground and then drew his knife and stabbed

2. Primary Chronicle 1953, 119-120.

3. Stender-Petersen 1934, 153-154; Krappe 1937, 210.

4. Blankoff 1991, 32-34.

him, afterwards seizing all the loser's property and the power over his Kasogians. Unlike the both young warriors, Roman and Russian, Prince Mstislav did not defend his native country from invaders, but he himself acted as a conqueror in relation to the Kasogians.

More resembling the Russian young warrior is the hero of 'The Saga of Bjorn, Champion of the Hitardal People' (*Bjarnar saga Hítðælakappa*). The saga's chapter IV refers to Bjorn's adventures in Russia, ruled at the time by "King Valdimarr" (Prince Vladimir the Great). The country was invaded by a mighty army, led by Valdimarr's near kinsman named Kaldimarr. Kaldimarr was regarded as having equal rights of sovereignty in Russia and had not obtained the throne because he was younger than Valdimarr. When Valdimarr learned of the invasion, he sent messengers offering his kinsman half the kingdom, if he would only depart in peace. However, Kaldimarr declined this offer, demanding the whole of the realm. If this were not satisfactory to Valdimarr, he offered him the alternatives of either fighting a duel with him or else their two armies should fight. Neither choice was a happy one to Valdimarr, but after the lapse of some time he offered to provide a substitute to fight the duel on his behalf. Kaldimarr agreed on the condition that the sovereignty of the whole realm should depend on the result. Despite offers of friendship and honour, none amongst the king's men was willing to fight with Kaldimarr, until a Scandinavian, who was in the service of King Valdimarr, Bjorn stepped forward. After a desperate fight, during which Bjorn was himself wounded almost to death, he managed to slay Kaldimarr. For this deed he received great honour from the king and all the armour, which Kaldimarr had owned, in addition to the champion's famous sword, Maeringr. Following upon this, Bjorn was himself called a champion was known as Champion of the men of Hitardale (*Hitdoellakappi*), because of the district from which he came⁵.

There are some coincidences between the single combat of the Iclander Bjorn with Kallimarr, who was "mikill ok mattigr", and the fighting of the Russian youth with the Pecheneg champion, who was "gigantic and fearsome". At the same time, the rivalry between Valdimarr and Kaldimarr resembles the quarrel of two princely brothers for Kiev⁶. Valdimarr was Vladimir the Great, who ruled over Russia as Grand Prince of Kiev from 978 to 1015. Svjatoslav, Grand Prince of Kiev, died in 973 and was succeeded by his three sons, Jaropolk, Oleg and Vladimir, who divided the realm between them, Jaropolk ruling in Kiev itself,

5. *The Saga of Bjorn*, 2002, 153–221.

6. Cross 1931, 139-140; Stender-Petersen 1934, 162-163.

Oleg in Dereva and Vladimir in Novgorod. Oleg was soon killed, and Vladimir challenging his oldest brother's sovereignty managed to become the ruler of all Russia. Since Bjorn was probably not born until about 989, it is obvious that he could not have been present at the events which took place in 978 and 992.⁷

Unlike other similar stories, the single combat between the young Russian warrior and a fearsome Pecheneg has a fabulous version, to which Hero's adversary is not an enemy warrior, but a dragon-like Serpent, who has got into the habit of offending the Russian lands. The ferocious Serpent is opposed by Hero named Nikita the Tanner (*Kožemjaka*):

"One day, somewhere near Kíev, Zmej (Serpent) appeared, who demanded heavy tribute from the people. He demanded every time to eat a fair maiden: and at last the turn came to the Tsarévna (princess). But Zmej would not eat her, she was too beautiful. He dragged her into his den and made her his wife. When he flew out on business, he used to pile logs of wood in front of the den to prevent the Tsarévna escaping. But the Tsarévna had a little dog that had followed her all the way from home. When she wrote a letter to her father and mother she used to tie it to the neck of her little dog, which would run all the way home and bring an answer back. One day her parents wrote to her: "Try to discover anyone who is stronger than Zmej". The Tsarévna got every day on more intimate terms with her Zmej in order to discover who was stronger. At last he owned that Nikíta, the tanner at Kíev, was the stronger. So the Tsarévna at once wrote to her father: "Look for Nikíta, the tanner at Kíev, and send him on to me to deliver me from my imprisonment".

So the Tsar looked for Nikíta, and went to him himself to beg him to release the land from the cruelty of Zmej and redeem the princess. Just then Nikíta was tanning skins. He was just enfolding twelve hides in his hands. But when he saw the Tsar come to see him, his hands so trembled for fear that he rent the twelve hides. But, however much the Tsar and the Tsarítsa asked him, he would not set out against Zmej. Then the Tsar assembled five thousand children, who were to mollify the tanner with their bitter tears. The little ones came to Nikíta and begged him to go and fight Zmej. And when he saw them weep, Nikíta the tanner himself almost felt the tears flowing. He took thirty *puds* of hemp, tarred it, and swathed himself in it in order that Zmej might find him a hard morsel, and then set out.

7. For the way of the Russian tale to the Icelandic saga, see Cross 1929, 177-197.

But Zmej locked himself up in his den and would not come to view. "Come with me into the open field, otherwise I will shatter your den to pieces!" said the tanner, and began clattering at the doors. Then Zmej, seeing his doom approach, came out into the open. Nikíta the tanner fought the grisly worm some time, maybe long, maybe short, and at last got him under. Then Zmej besought Nikíta the tanner: "Do not beat me to death. Stronger than us two there is nothing in the white world. Let us divide the earth. You may live on the one half and I on the other." "Very well!" said Nikíta, "only we must delimit frontiers". So the tanner took the plough, which weighed three hundred *puds*, and harnessed to it Zmej, and drew the harrow all the way from Kíev to the Caspian Sea. "Now we have divided the entire earth", said Zmej. "Yes, we have divided the earth, but not the sea; Nikíta answered, - we must also divide the sea, otherwise you would say I was taking your share of the water". So they then set out into the middle of the sea, and there Nikíta slew Zmej and drowned him. The trench may still be seen: it is two fathoms deep. They plough all round it; but never touch the bottom: those who do not know whence came this trench call it a battlement. When Nikíta had done this feat, he demanded no reward for it, but went home and went on tanning."⁸

In general, the Serpent looks like a symbolic image of a real external danger from the enemies who were Pechenegs in the 10th century. The historical school proceeds from the idea of the primacy of the fact underlying the chronicle text. They see in the story of Kožemjaka a historical legend reworked into a fairy tale, in which the hero received a regular name and his adversary was replaced by a folk character (a snake). On the contrary, the mythopoetic school suggests that the serpent and the hero were much older than the events of the 10th century. The images are mythological archetypes which habitually surfaced in the mind of a person who seeks to describe an intense struggle with the enemy. An example is the Primary Chronicle's association in the speech of the Prince Vladimir Monomakh on the victory over the Cumans (*Polovtsy*) in 1103: "For the Lord hath freed us from our foes, and put down our enemies, and crushed the serpents' heads. He bath given them as food to the men of Rus"⁹. A specific

8. Afanasiev № 148, SUS 300₂, 300*. The hero bears also the name of Kyrýlo the Tanner or Elijah the Tailor; in some versions his role belongs to the saints Boris and Gleb, or Kuzma and Damian, or even St. George who harnesses to the plow St. Nikolas instead the Serpent (Uspenskij 1982, 100–101).

9. *Primary Chronicle* 1953, 202.

event served only as the reason to describe it on the basis of an accustomed archetype. The degree of remoteness from the mythopoetic basis and, accordingly, the proximity to the real situation depended on the chosen genre. The similarity of the folklore plot and the chronicle story indicates the commonality of their source, which, probably, was the myth about Hero's struggle with a chthonic monster. Folklore names for this creature of the other world, with which a fairy-tale hero (*bogatyř, khrabr*) entered into battle, are varied as *Zmej Gorynyč* (Fiery Serpent), *Zmej Tugarin* (Tugarin the Serpent), or *Čudo Yudo* (Fearless Monster or Outlandish Marvel). The series of fairy tales and several epic poetry (*byliny*) belong to the same Dragon-Slayer type, according to Aarne-Thompson-Uther's classification¹⁰.

The single-combat story in the Primary Chronicle and its folkloric versions contain several mythological motifs, which will be object of consideration in this article: a) relation of the monster from the Netherworld to earth, fire, air, and water; b) symbolic meaning of the abducted princess; c) fiery river as the boundary with the Netherworld; d) hero's and serpent's joint ploughing the furrow as a boundary; e) hero's age as a key to the initiation rites; f) hero's relation to cattle.

Zmej as a serpent-like monster from the Netherworld

Hero's adversary in the form of a serpent / dragon is a quite spread figure in fairy folktales¹¹. Its Slavic version is *Zmej* (lit. 'snake, serpent') depicted as a huge dragon with several heads. The Russian word '*Zmej*' (Serb. '*zmaj*') is perhaps akin to '*zemlja*' ('earth') and may descended from pro-to-Slavic root *zbm* and Indo-European **ǵhdem*¹². Snake nature of the monster shows its chthonic character.

Serpents and dragons are often depicted as monsters that live in the waters or near some basin. So Tugarin the serpent swims along the Oka River, its length is three hundred fathoms, with its back it brings down the steep banks, threatening to flood the whole country (Sakharov № 98, 106). The heroes of ancient epics

10. ATU 300, 303, 306, 314, 315, 317, 321, 328*. Cf. Barag 1981, 160-188; Matweeva 2015, 359-361.

11. On the multiplicity of the serpent-slayer topic's versions, see Barag 1981, 160-162, 172-175.

12. On the Serpent, see Korinfskij 1901, 601-616; Ivanov, Toporov 1970, 1180-1202; Novikov 1974, 180-192; Propp 1986, 216-280; 1999, 181-259; Afanasjev 2008, 756-826. Cf. Gordeev 2002, 45-60.

meet the Serpent Gorynyč on the Izrai River and the Safat River (Kirša Danilov № 184, 346). The serpent that Kirilo Kožemjaka fought lived in the Dnieper. Often Zmej appears in the guise of the Water King (*Vodjanoj*), one of the incarnations of Velesъ, the ruler of the chthonic world, who lived in basins¹³. Procopius of Caesarea (*Bellum Gothicum* III. 14. 24) writes of the Slavs that they “revere rivers and nymphs and various other heathen powers; and they sacrifice to them all, and practice their divinations at these sacrifices”¹⁴. The Gustinskaja chronicle mentions “certain people who made offerings in wells, lakes, and groves” (PSRL II, 257). In the Russian North, water-basins were associated with Velesъ¹⁵. B.A. Rybakov has found an analogy between Zmej and a mythical Pangolin (*Jačšer*), which was worshiped in the medieval Russian North. The association is interesting, in spite of the author’s vulgar interpretation¹⁶. People tradition associated also a water monster with the pagan deity Perun, which in folk conscience replaced original Velesъ. In Ukrainian folk tales Velesъ, banished from Kyiv, inhabited an island on the Dnieper and raided from there Rus’ in the form of a serpent¹⁷. Water bodies, especially deep pools, were viewed as a way to the underworld, where the chthonic monster was dwelling. The water characteristic brings him closer to the Vedic serpent Vritra (*Vṛtra*), the shutter of the waters. Vritra is sometimes called *ahi budhnya* (‘Dragon of the Deep’), a snake from the bottom of the waters. The rivers flow only because Indra killed Vritra and released the waters swallowed by the serpent¹⁸. According to V.Ja. Propp, ancient Greeks similarly thought that a many-headed snake-daughter of Typhon, Hydra swallowed all the waters around Lerna and made the country swampy¹⁹. Thus, Herakles killing Hydra does the same beneficence for the local people as Indra in India. A similar act of bravery was made by the Russian bogatyr in the bylina “Dobrynja and Zmej” [AA 300A, 301]. The Vedic idea of the serpent’s swallowing waters is depicted there in a particular manner: when Dobrynja killed Zmej, all of the world became full of the latter’s blood. The serpent’s blood symbolizes here released water:

13. For Velesъ, see Jakobson 1969, 579-599; Ivanov, Toporov 1973, 46-82; Ivanov, Toporov 1974, 31-75; Rybakov 1981, 421-431; Uspenskij 1982, 31-115; Ivanković 2019, 55-81.

14. For more, see West 2007, 278.

15. Ivanov, Toporov 1973, 46.

16. See Rybakov 1981, 397-398; 1987, 259-286.

17. See Gruznova 2010, 108-127.

18. *Rig Veda* I. 32; 51. 4-5; 52. 5-6; 121. 11; II. 11. 5; III. 3; IV. 17; VIII. 12-26; 85. 18 etc.

19. Propp 1986, 217, 253-258.

“The Serpent spilled its blood,
The blood flowed down the mountain from east to west,
But then the mother damp earth
Wouldn’t swallow the Serpent’s blood.
Dobrynja was standing in blood for three whole days,
Dobrynja was sitting on his steed and was horrified,
Then Dobrynja wanted to ride away.
A voice from the heavens again announced to Dobrynja:
“Hail to you, my young Dobrynja, Nikita’s son!
With your Tatar spear
Strike the mother damp earth,
And recite a charm to the earth.”
Then he struck the damp earth,
And he recited a charm to the earth:
“Open wide, mother damp earth,
In all directions, in all four directions!
Swallow all the Serpent’s blood!”
The mother damp earth opened wide
In four directions, in all four directions,
It swallowed the Serpent’s blood.”²⁰

Most often the flying Serpent of the Russian fairy tales has the name *Zmej Gorynyč*. There are some interpretations for the second name Gorynyč. The word can be etymologically related to *gora* (mountain). The monster either lives in the mountains, or himself is huge as a mountain. There was a Slavic name *Gorynja* (*gora*, ‘huge, gigantic’). A character with this name acts in the Russian folk tale, together with two other giants: Usynia (Rus. *us* – ‘moustache’) and Dubynia (Rus. *dub* – ‘oak’)²¹. These bogatyrs are giants, in whose image it seems possible to see the personification of powerful and majestic forces and natural phenomena. Three giants personify certain forces of nature: Usynia, the river cataracts, Gorynia, the river streams, and Dubynia, the winds. Their activity is often of a spontaneous,

20. Bailey, Ivanova 1998, 92 (lines 272-291).

21. Afanasjev № 141: “Medvedko, Usynja, Gorynja and Dubynja – bogatyri” [AA 301].

unconscious or to a very small extent conscious nature and is undertaken, as they say in one fairy tale, “for themselves (that is, the hero) for fun”. Gorynja “moves mountains”, “rolls mountains from place to place”, “rolls mountains from handle to handle”, “sits on a chair, shakes the mountain with his hands”, “on the little finger shakes the mountain”, pounding “mountain against mountain”, “rests sideways, pushes mountains”, walks in the Balkan mountains, which “go beyond the clouds”, and throws the mountains behind the clouds with a shovel²².

Gorynyč can be a patronymic from ‘Gorynja’, with the meaning ‘Gorynia’s son’. J. Kalik and A. Uchitel argue that the monstrous character was created in a certain region not far from Kyiv²³. There is a river called Goryn’ (Horyn’), a tributary of Pripjat’, flowing northward through Ukrainian Volhynia and Belarusian Polesje. In the bylina about Dobrynja Nikitič, Zmej Gorynyč acts as the master of the magic Pučaj River, and he lived in the Soročin Mountains. Pučaj River can be identified with Počajna, a small tributary of the Dnieper near Kyiv. Soročin Mountains are not known, but there is a village called Soročin (now Soročen’) at the sources of the River Už—another tributary of the Pripjat’—flowing eastward and beginning in close proximity to the Goryn’ valley. Už means ‘grass snake’, but this is a relatively new name for this river, which possibly originated from its association with Zmej Gorynyč. The old name of the River Už was Uša (Pol. Usza), which has no convincing Slavic etymology, but in the Avestan ušā means ‘dawn’, and this Iranian word corresponds to the Sanskrit name of the Indian goddess of dawn—Uṣas. Thus, the place of the origin of Zmej Gogynyč can be located at the spring near the village of Soročen’ in the Goryn’ River valley, from which the River Už flows. The Serpent itself was probably regarded as a son of the river Goryn’ or its personification, giant Gorynia and Uša—the female personification of dawn.

Another etymology of Gorynyč derives the word from the monster’s ability to spew fire (Rus. *goret’* – to burn). The serpent perpetually threatens his adversaries to burn them:

“A fierce serpent flies at him, scorches with fire, threatens with death”.

“The serpent scorches with flame, tears with its claws”.

“Here the serpent emitted a fiery flame from itself, wants to burn the prince”.

“I will burn your kingdom with fire, scatter ashes”.²⁴

22. Novikov 1974, 147-148. For more details, see Korinfskij 1901, 601-616.

23. Kalik, Uchitel 2019, 150-151.

24. Afanasiev № 155, 271, 562; Khudjakov № 119.

Fairy tales do not describe exactly how the Serpent's fire erupts. Zmej carries fire within itself and spews it out in the event of an attack. The connection of the Serpent with the fiery element is indicated by one of its folklore images - the Fiery Serpent (*Ognennyj Zmej*)²⁵. A tenth-century Persian geographer Istakhri states that the Slavs (*Saqḷab*) all venerate fire, and more recent literary sources and ethnographic evidence attest fire-worship or prayers to the fire among various Slavonic peoples²⁶. In Russian folklore, the Fiery Serpent visits girls or women at night in the guise of their dead or missing sweethearts or husbands. Moreover, the discovery of the true essence of a lover, and even more so the refusal to communicate with him, often leads to the death of the victim²⁷. From the chronicles it can be seen that falling stars and meteors were associated with fiery snakes.

AM 6536 (1028). A serpentine portent visible to the whole country appeared in the heavens.

AM 6599 (1091). In this year, while [Prince] Vsevolod was hunting wild beasts behind Vyshgorod, and as the men were stretching snares and the beaters were shouting, - a huge serpent fell from the sky, and all the people were terrified. At this time the earth uttered a groan audible to many.

AM 6652(1144) There is a portent beyond the Dnieper in the Kiev region: flying across heaven to earth like a circle of fire, and his sign remained on the trail in the form of a great serpent, and stood in the sky for an hour of the day and was naked.

AM 7064 (1556) There is a portent - of the place where the star was in heaven, appearing like a serpent, without a head, standing ... otherwise, like a trunk, take a tail, and like a barrel and fall on the earth with fire, and was like smoke on the ground.²⁸

The Serpent's location in mountains and its association with fire do not prevent it from being a water monster. In some folk tales, Zmej lives in the mountains, but when the hero approaches him, it comes out of the water. In others, Zmej flies to Russian country from far away, from Black Sea; it is a sea serpent, which lives in the water, sleeps on a stone in the sea. Zmej's double nature, showing itself in the

25. See Skripil 1946, 35-39; Jakobson, Ružičić 1950, 343-355.

26. See West 2007, 269.

27. See Kozlova 2000, 6-7.

28. PSRL I, 92; II, 19; III, 121; IV, 309; XXXVIII, 64, 86; *Primary Chronicle* 1953, 136, 173; Svjatsky 2007, 243-249; Afanasjev 2008, 757.

connection with fire and water, gives rise for the association between him and the monstrous creature Cacus in Roman mythology²⁹. Cacus is depicted as a monstrous, three-headed, semi-human being (*semihomo*, *monstrum* and *semifer*)³⁰. As the son of Vulcan³¹, he has the ability to belch out fire³². Zmej is also depicted as a terrible and fearsome monster with wings, smoke and fire comes from him as from a chimney. Both Cacus' and Zmej's dwelling was a cave leading into the depths of the earth³³. The cave looks like an entrance to the underworld, and its inhabitant resembles a chthonic creature³⁴. Some scholars regard Cacus as a demon of death³⁵. Cacus' cave was surrounded (rather, decorated) with the skulls and bones of the people he killed³⁶. Approaching to Serpent's dwelling place, "Dobrynja got off the horse, took a sharp saber in his right hand, a hero's club in his left, and went to the snake caves. Only a step took - the sky darkened, thunder rumbled: Zmej Gorynyč was flying, holding a dead body in its claws. Fire cuts out of the mouth, smoke pours out of the ears, copper claws burn like heat ..." The similarity with Cacus shows that Zmej possesses the underground fire rather, than heavenly one, in spite of the narrators depicted him in bylinas as giving off flames from the sky. After defeating Zmej in the three-day battle and killing him, Dobrynja enters the caves that served as the Serpent's dwelling and finds there many noble captives intended to be eaten by the monster.

The releasing of the people, especially women, prisoned by Zmej in the caves, is similar to the cattle's liberation from the cave by Indra, after he killed the demon Valu (or the serpent Vritra), or by Hercules, after he killed the monster Cacus³⁷. In his mountain cave Vritra has held back the waters—commonly likened to cattle—and so he brings drought. Indra slays the dragon and the waters stream down "like lowing cattle" (*Rig Veda* I. 32. 2)³⁸. Indra is commonly called Vritrahan, "slayer of

29. For the connection of Cacus with Indo-European mythology, see Woodard 2006, 191-199.

30. Servius *ad Aeneid* VIII. 193; 198; 267; Propertius IV. 9. 9-10.

31. Vergil *Aeneid* VIII. 198; Servius *ad Aeneid* VIII. 190; Ovid *Fasti* I. 554; Mythographi Vaticani I. 66. 1.

32. Vergil *Aeneid* VIII. 193-199, 251-252; Ovid *Fasti* I. 570-576; Servius *ad Aeneid* VIII. 190; Mythographi Vaticani I. 66. 1.

33. Cf. Vergil *Aeneid* VIII. 241-246 and Bailey, Ivanova 1998, 86, 90-93.

34. Cf. Hrobat Virloget 2015, 153-165.

35. Galinsky 1966, 38-40; Davies 2004, 32-34.

36. Ovid *Fasti* I. 556-559; Vergil *Aeneid* VIII. 195-197.

37. See Ivanov, Toporov 1974, 40-45; Woodard 2006, 193-194.

38. See also Watkins 1995: 297-320 and *passim*.

Vritra", an epithet which can also be applied to other conquering deities, but which first and foremost belongs to Indra³⁹. Thus, the Russian Zmej winner, Kožemjaka or Dobrynja, is similar to Vedic Indra or Greco-Roman Hercules.

Serpent's possession of fire is connected with the monster's ability to fly, but, as a rule, nothing is said about its wings (Afanasiev №171, 176, 204). Only once is it reported about "fiery wings" (the fairy tale "Frolka-idle", Afanasiev № 131). The Serpent's body is not usually described in folk tales, and only popular imagination depicts it as a huge snake, which favorite details are a long tail with an arrow and clawed paws. Zmej's connection with air, fire and water elements indicates its borderline character between 'this' and 'that' worlds. Like a dragon combining the features of two animals, representing the water and air elements, a bird and a snake, Zmej Gorynyč flies through the air. Serpent's fiery nature symbolizes its appearance from the Netherworld, separated from the hero's country by a fiery river. Most often, the Serpent appears as three-headed, but also with six, nine or twelve heads (sometimes five or seven)⁴⁰. The multi-headedness is the monster's indispensable feature.⁴¹ The number of heads is usually a multiple of three. This multi-headedness does not represent a hypertrophied image of devouring, as V.Ja. Propp believed, but rather symbolizes immortality and tripartite structure of the universe⁴². Zmej demonstrates its connection with air, fire and water, as if the three-headed deity hidden under this image claims to sovereignty over all these components of the world.

Symbolism of the abducted princess

In the Primary chronicle the young unnamed Hero saved the Russian country from the Pecheneg danger, instead his folklore forerunner Nikita the Tammer liberates the royal daughter. The motif of slaying a monster and liberation of a princess is spread in folklore⁴³. If the 'country' is here the substitute for 'princess', what was the mythological model for the latter?

39. For some other dragon-slayers, see Watkins 1995, 441-468.

40. Pletneva 1979, 127-129; Korolev 1998, 64-69; Lyzlova 2008, 55-57. On the tricephality, see Trkanjec 2013, 9-25.

41. Cf. Thompson B15.1.2 – B15.1.2.10.3.

42. Propp 1986, 247-248; cf. Ivanov, Toporov 1973, 46; Dynda 2014, 74-75.

43. ATU 300, 302, 315, 317, 653, cf. 672C; AT 300, 301, 303, 305*, 317, 466**, 506, cf. 506A, 507A, 507C; SUS 300₁=AA 300A, 300₂, 300*, cf. 312D=AA *312 I.

The flying Serpent abducts women, often appearing in the form of wind or whirlwind (Afanasiev № 160). “Suddenly a strong wind blew, the sand rose up intertwining, snatched the child out of the hands of the nanny and carried it away to no one knows where” (Khudjakov № 53). “After all, this is not a whirlwind, but a fierce Serpent,” the tale says (Afanasiev № 560). Fairy-tale heroines will certainly find themselves in the Netherworld⁴⁴. When the hero is looking for the princess, it turns out that she is in the power of a Serpent. The king had three daughters, who were usually walked in a beautiful garden, and “a Serpent from the Black Sea began to flying there. One day the royal daughters were late in the garden, staring at the flowers; suddenly - out of nowhere – from the Black Sea appeared Serpent, and carried them away on his fiery wings” (Afanasiev № 131). Sometimes the Serpent appeared in the form of Koščeј the Immortal: “Koščeј flew out the window in a terrible whirlwind” (Afanasiev № 159)⁴⁵.

Sometimes Zmej imposes a tribute on the city in the form of a woman. The fairytale hero, when he gets to a foreign country, sees that all people are “walking so awkward”, and learns that Zmej every year (or every month, etc.) demands a girl, and now it is the turn of the royal daughter. This kind of fairy tales belong to the type of “Princess (maiden) abducted by monster (ogre)” [AT 301D* R11.1]. The Russian hero holds back the princess likewise to Perseus saves Andromeda, Herakles – Hesione from Poseidon, and Theseus reaves away Ariadne⁴⁶. The monster’s claim to women for sexual purposes led scholars to supposition that the tales depict human sacrifices to the old generation of gods, and Hero’s intervention allows people to refuse the archaic custom⁴⁷. In the myth, the woman is the reason why the Serpent appeared in the human kingdom, she is interesting for the monster for unclear purposes (to eat her, to intercourse or to marry in order to receive her kingdom). In fairy tales, a royal daughter’s deliverance from the Serpent usually entails her subsequent marriage with Hero, who thus gains her kingdom. The girl obviously symbolizes sovereignty over the country, being the king’s daughter⁴⁸. The hero, as it were, replaces the Serpent, who claimed the same role of the queen’s husband, defeating him in a fair fight. A.S. Lyzlova

44. Lyzlova 2008, 54.

45. See Petrov 2008 (a), 287-295.

46. Propp 1986, 252-253.

47. Šternberg 1936, 465-467; Propp 1986, 258-261; 1999, 93-94, 100-101, 103-109. For criticism for the ‘paleontological’ approach to the bylinas of Dobrynja and Sadko, see Žirmunskij 2004, 249.

48. For the sovereignty as a woman in Slavic traditions, see Lajoye 2019, 173-177.

points many features, which allow her to see in the princess' abduction by Zmej (or its substitute) a Slavic version of the Greek myth of Persephone⁴⁹.

In bylinas, however, Hero does not marry the saved princess and even not seek after her hand. This allows suggesting that in the original mythological motive, the girl/princess symbolized something other than sovereignty, or she was the bride of somebody else, whose interests the Hero defended. In the first case, the princess could embody the inhabited country, saved the hero from being absorbed by abyss, which associates with wild nature (forests, lakes, rivers etc.) and Veleś as its deity. Since the Serpent relates to the underground chthonic world, his adversary represented the bright heavenly world of the sun. He could be, in a sense, the personification of the solar deity and even the sun itself. Thus, in the battle for the girl (the earth), the forces of darkness (the abyss) and the forces of light (the sky) converge, and the victory of Hero representing the sun opens up the opportunity for a new rebirth to nature and the world.

The subsequent marriage of Hero with the saved girl seems to be a mythological reflection of the Sacred Marriage (Hieros Gamos) ritual, known to many nations on their archaic stage⁵⁰. Fighting against the Serpent is a part of the primordial myth about the marriage between the heavenly Father-god and Mother-Earth. Father-god as Lord of the Shining Sky is known as the Indian *Dyaus pitar*, the Greek Ζεύς πατήρ, the Roman *Iupiter*, *Diespiter*, the Umbrian *Iupater*, the Illyrian Δειπάτυρος, the Baltic *Dievas*, the Old Germanic *Tiwaz* or *Ziu*, and the Old Russian *Dažbog*⁵¹. The goddess of Earth is the Russian *Mati Syra Zemlja*, the Avestian *Arōdvi Sūra Anahita*, the Greek Δημητηρ, the Vedic *Prthivi matar*, the Sanskrit *Ṛṥthvī Mātā*, the Hittite *Dagan-zipas*, and the Zoroastrian *Zemes Māte*⁵². In Vedic mythology Mother Earth is complementary to Father Sky (*Dyaus pitar*), and primarily Earth and Sky were unseparated as *Dyavapṛthivi*. It was Indra (or Varuna) who separated them from each other. Greek mythology, which was organized during the formation of the polis society, resolved this rivalry on the basis of a 'social contract': Persephone spent part of the annual cycle in the kingdom of Hade, and the other part on the Earth among people. Another form of mythological relationship was developed by the Eastern Slavs.

49. Lyzlova 2011, 100-104.

50. For Hieros Gamos, see Avagianou 1991; Nissinen, Uro 2008.

51. For Dažbog, see Kutarev 2021, 195-217.

52. For Mati Syra Zemlja, see Toporov 2000, 239-371; Pimenova, Moshina 2021, 138-151.

The chthonic Water-god took image of the Russian *Veles*, *Volos*, the Lithuanian *Velnias*, *Vielona*, the Latvian *Velns*, *Vels*, and the Indian *Varuna*. Zmej Gorynyč, as well as the Vedic *Vala* or *Vrtra*, was his image or his assignee. Water-god was the former partner or a relative (perhaps, brother) of the Mother-Earth, and he tried to prevent her marriage with the Sky-god. He takes the form of the monstrous Serpent or sends the Serpent as his proxy to abduct the divine bride. The Sky-god himself, as the Greek Zeus, the Roman Jupiter, or with the help of his representative – a storm-god⁵³ get into the fight with the Serpent, overcome and kills him, providing thus the marriage with the Mother-Earth. The myth was the background of ritual competitions in calendar festivals of the annual cycle, as well as the ritual rivalry between relatives of bride and groom in marriage ceremony⁵⁴. In folklore, the Sky-god is usually replaced by the King of the country, the Mother-Earth acts as the royal daughter or niece, the storm-god is represented by the hero-protagonist, and the only Serpent acts in his original guise. However, in some variants Dobrynja fights with She-Serpent, behind whose one can see the Mother-Earth herself⁵⁵.

Thus, the rescue of girl from the Serpent seems to be a mythological version of the deliverance of the world from being absorbed by the forces of chthonic darkness, an abyss of chaos. Similarly, some Rig Veda's hymns refer to Indra killing the Serpent and releasing the sun:

Rig Veda I. 32. 4: When, Indra, thou hadst slain the dragon's firstborn, and overcome the charms of the enchanters, Then, giving life to Sun and Dawn and Heaven, thou foundest not one foe to stand against thee;

Rig Veda I. 52. 4: Whom those that flow in heaven on sacred grass, his own assistants, nobly-natured, fill full like the sea,— Beside that Indra when he smote down *Vrtra* stood his helpers, straight in form, mighty, invincible;

Rig Veda II. 19. 3: To him who worshippeth hath Indra given many and matchless gifts. He slayeth *Vrtra*. Straight was he to be sought with supplications by men who struggled to obtain the sunlight.

53. The Hittite *Tarhūnna*, the Vedic *Indra*, the Slavonic *Perun*, the Baltic *Perkunas*, *Perkons*, *Perkuns*, the Germanic *Donar* or *Thor*, the Celtic *Taranus* or *Taranis*. For more details, see West 2007, 238-251, cf. Gimbutas 1967, 742-746.

54. On the link between *Perun* / *Perkunas* and marriage, see Ivanov, Toporov 1974, 24-26.

55. For Dobrynja's fighting with the female Serpent, see Bernstam 2011, 247-255.

The same feat is performed by the protagonist Ivan Cinders in a Russian fairy tale "Ivan Popjalov" (Afanasiev № 135). In the kingdom where Ivan lives, there was no day, but all night: it was a Serpent who has made the darkness. Ivan and his brothers killed the Serpent, took the serpent's head and, coming to his house, "they broke the head - and a white light became throughout the whole kingdom". Hero (Indra, Ivan)'s defeat of the Dragon/Serpent belongs to the archaic myth of Creation⁵⁶.

It is likely that the similar idea took place among the ancient Slavs in connection with the significant role which the sky gods Dažbog and Khors. Researchers of Russian folk life note the prevalence of images of Serpent on household items and art. The plot of the Sun's kidnapping (abduction) by a Serpent was especially popular. In fairy tales, the Serpent is freely replaced by Koščeĭ the Immortal⁵⁷. The death of Koščeĭ is hidden so far that he is called the Immortal: on the sea on the ocean, on the island on Bujan there is a green oak, an iron chest is buried under that oak, a hare in that chest, a duck in a hare, and an egg in the duck; one has only to get this egg and squeeze it in his hand, as immediately Koščeĭ begins to feel terrible pain; one has only to crush an egg - and Koščeĭ instantly dies [Afanasiev № 156, 157, 158; SUS 302, cf. ATU 302]. The miraculous egg symbolizes the sun reviving in the spring, and like Koščeĭ, the darkness of winter perishes from the rays of the rising (spring) sun. The hero's finding of the magical egg means that he saves the sun, which the Serpent seeks to devour.

Thus, it is not by chance that Kožemjaka and Dobrynja, after liberation of the princess (Tsarevna and Prince Vladimir's niece), do not try to woo her hand. Their behavior is determined by the basic myth, in which the role of the serpent-slayer belongs to a storm-god. V.N. Toporov and V.V. Ivanov interpret the cosmic battle between the thunder-god (Perunъ) and his chthonian adversary (Velesъ, Zmej) as the central theme of ancient Slavic mythology⁵⁸. However, we must pay attention that the competition between Perunъ and Velesъ has the reason in the refusal of the chthonian deity to approve the marriage between Earth and Sky (*Mati Syra Zemlja* and *Dažbog*). Perunъ acts in the role of the substitute / advocate of the Sky-god, as well as Kožemjaka and Dobrynja struggle with Zmej in favor of the Kievan prince Vladimir, withal defending the interests of the Russian country (*Russkaja Zemlja*). Perunъ was not the major heaven god,

56. Cf. Brown 1942, 85-98; 1965, 23-34.

57. On Koščeĭ as a version of Zmej, see Toporov 1967, 96; Lyzlova 2008, 59-60; cf. Novikov 1974, 192-218; Žučkova, Galaj 2015, 165-175.

58. Ivanov, Toporov 1974, 4-179; Uspenskij 1982, 31-117.

but a companion of Dažbog and Khors (Vedic *Surja*, Iranian *khvar*). The main role in the triad belonged to Dažbog (Indo-European **deiwo-*). According to “The Song of Igor’s Campaign”, Russian people saw themselves as the “grand-children of Dažbog” (*Dažbož’i vnuki*). It was why the first religious reform of Prince Vladimir the Great, who attempted to organize the pantheon around the ‘military’ god Perunъ, occurred unsuccessful⁵⁹.

Similar relationship between folkloric characters are represented in the bylines about Aljoša Popovič and Tugarin the Serpent, where the latter is depicted as an adulterer (seducer) rather, than as a rapist⁶⁰. He strives to fornicate with unmarried women, as well as with other men’s wives. Tugarin’s kingdom is the place where the “seducing girls” are located. In the bylina ‘Aljoša Popovič and Tugarin’, the Kievan princess openly deceives her husband, Prince Vladimir, with her lover Tugarin, and scolds Aljoša, who killed the impudently behaving Serpent, for separating her “from the dear friend, the young serpent Tugaretin”⁶¹. In one version, Aljoša not only reproaches the princess for lecherous behavior, but also accuses Prince Vladimir of pandering.

In the bylina “Aljoša Popovič, His Squire Yekim, and Tugarin”, the Serpent seduced Kievan prince’s bride and tends to show everyone that he hasn’t just taken the princess by force, but that the princess herself has chosen him voluntarily as a man whose ‘price’ is higher than that of her legitimate husband. Arriving to the Prince Vladimir’s feast, Aljoša Popovič sees Tugarin is sitting between the spouses, his arms around the princess. Aljoša tries to ask Prince Vladimir of the shaming situation’s meaning, but the prince doesn’t answer him, trying to conceal from the ones present at the feast his personal disgrace. The hero guesses that the Serpent has seduced the prince’s bride and his heart was filled up with ‘resentment’ (*obida*). Aljoša Popovič is the only one who can challenge Tugarin the Serpent to a single combat to protect the institution of marriage as a ‘God’s law’ (*zakon Bozhij*). Not occasionally the name of Aljoša Popovič has the meaning ‘defender of the Christian priestly order’. Tugarin the Serpent transgresses divine institutions and principles given to humankind:

“The infidel monster came in,
The Dog Tugarin Zmejevich.

59. For Vladimir’s pantheon, see Gieysztor 1977, 7-32; Zaroff 1997, 47-76.

60. The name ‘Tugarin’ can be associated with Tugar/Tugor-Khan (1028-1096), a Cuman (Polovets) nobleman. On the Cumans and the image of Zmey, see Pletneva 1979, 130-132.

61. *Russkie byliny* 1894, 97-101; *Byliny* 1938, 176-184. Cf. Ivanov, Toporov 1974, 171-172.

The Dog didn't pray to God,
He didn't greet the Prince and Princess,
He didn't bow to the princes and boyars".⁶²

Aljoša Popovič challenges his antagonist to revenge the insult to the Russian prince, as well as to the seducing girls and honorable widows (*čestnye vdovy*). The conflict between Aljoša Popovič and Tugarin the Serpent occurred because of a marriage, as the basic mythological motive suggested. However, the story seems thematically relate much more to the protection of the Orthodox cultural code, than to the defense of the motherland. The modification of the idea became relevant during the Russian colonization of Siberia and contacts with non-Christian peoples and ethnic groups. The new time storytellers and compilers could not even guess that the princely marriage had had in former times the mythological prototype in the marriage of Heaven and Earth. According Dumézil's functionality, Dažbog and Khors represented the first function of sovereignty, Perunъ – the second, military function, and Velesъ – the third function of fertility.

A water boundary with the chthonic world

There is an noticeable episode in the above mentioned bylina "Dobrynja and Zmej"⁶³. One day Dobrynja Nikitič decided to go on a dangerous journey to the distant mountains to help the Russian captives, who were captured by the enemies associated with little snakes. His mother warned him not to do that, do not "trample Zmej's children there", and, among others, she said:

"Don't go bathing in the mother Pučaj River.
That river is ferocious,
It's a ferocious and an angry river,
Fire blazes from the first current,
Sparks shower from the second current,
Smoke rises in a column from the third current,
Smoke rises in a column mixed with flames".

62. Bailey, Ivanova 1998, 125-126.

63. Bailey, Ivanova 1998, 84-97; there are more than 60 versions of the text. For the bylina's analysis, see Orlov, Propp 1971, 334-372; Smolitzky 1971, 181-192; Zakharova 1997, 86-106.

Nevertheless, Dobrynja left to the expedition and occurring near the Pučaj river he forgot his mother's instructions, took off armour and clothes, and jumped into the waters. As he swam he wondered about the warning: The river was as calm as a pond. But one instant later the sky turned black as night without a cloud being seen. Forth flew Zmej Gorynyč, a three-headed dragon with seven tails. Flames poured out of his mouth and heavy smoke issued from his ears. He had iron claws, and the air around him was saturated with sulphur. "An old prophecy foretells that one day Dobrynja would slay me", he roared, "but this proves wrong: The hero now is my victim!" In the beginning fighting Dobrynja overwhelmed his foe, Zmej acknowledged Dobrynja his big brother and they took a solemn vow: Dobrynja is not to intrude into Zmej's territory, while Zmej promised not to fly to Rus, not to take any more Russian captives, not to carry away any Christian people. However, Zmej has broken the agreement and abduct Prince Vladimir's lovely niece. Dobrynja was given an order to save the princess, and after three-day fighting he overwhelmed his enemy and hew off Zmej's three heads.

"Then he struck the damp earth [by his spear],
And he recited a charm to the earth:
'Open wide, mother damp earth,
In all directions, in all four directions!
Swallow all the dragon's blood!'
The mother damp earth opened wide
In four directions, in all four directions,
It swallowed Zmej's blood."

The name of the *Pučaj*-river, despite of its similarity with the river Počajna near Kyiv, is rather derived from the verb '*pučit*' (to become swollen). The unusual designation can be explained taking in consideration that in fairy tales the river bears the name '*Smorodina*'. "There is a wide river, across the river is the Kalinov (*Kalinovyj*) bridge, the 12-head serpent lives under that bridge. It does not let the horse or foot pass through, it devours everyone" (Afanasiev № 562). "The very midnight comes, and they went under the Kalinov bridge, to the river of fire" (Afanasiev № 134). "They come to the river Smorodina; human bones lie along the entire shore, knee-deep will be heaped!" (Afanasiev № 137). The Russian word '*smorodina*' means currant and the '*Smorodina* river' can be inter-

preted as ‘river with water of red colour’⁶⁴. But more likely the ‘Smorodina river’ means ‘stinking’ from the word ‘*smorod / smrad*’ (stench) because it is not water that runs in the river, but fiery flames. It seems to be why the fiery river is called ‘*Pučaj*’ that means the river which hot water became swollen and boiled.

An essential attribute of the fiery river is Kalinov bridge, which also depicted as a particular (wooden, stone, iron, copper, silver, gold) bridge “through which serpents travel”. It is the sacred (inviolable, forbidden) bridge, on which none of the people safely passed. In Russian and Belarusian folklore, the Kalinov (‘*kalinovyj*’) bridge is mentioned more often than in the Ukrainian or in the lore of other nations⁶⁵. The hero fights against Zmej on the Kalinov bridge over the Smorodina river⁶⁶. In a special article about the fighting on the Kalinov bridge, G. Barag suggests that ‘*kalinovyj* (of viburnum)’ was not an epithet originally associated with the image of a bridge in East Slavic fairy tales about serpent fighting⁶⁷. In his opinion, this definition could become traditional under the influence of the Russian songs, to traditional style of which belong such idiom as “bed *tesovaja* (plank)”, “chambers *belokamennye* (white-stone)”, “sword *bulatnyj* (damask)”, “meadows *zapovednye* (reserved, sacred)”, “field *čistoe* (clean)”. “Bridge *kalinovyj*” belongs to this series. However, the epithet *kalinovyj* perhaps began associate with viburnum (*kalina*) in folk poetry because of its red color, while its original, mythological meaning was connected with the word ‘*kalénij*’ (incandescent, sizzling or red hot), ‘*kalít*’ (to calorify), and ‘*kálina*’ (burnt). The bridge over the fiery river is red and incandescent from the heat of the flames below. It is the bridge to the Other World [AT 471].

The fiery Smorodina river marks the border between cultural space and the wild world of nature⁶⁸. Other nations outside the hero’s own kingdom also belonged to the alien world beyond the boundary. Therefore, the Serpent could be depicted as a representative or ruler both nature and any hostile nation. This alien world seemed to be terrible for being unknown, but at the same time it was attractive for the treasures and wealth belonged to it. In folklore the hero defends his realm against the Serpent’s attacks. Their fighting on the Kalinov bridge over

64. On the fiery river Smorodina, see Uspenskij 1982, 143-144; Eremina 1991, 151-152.

65. For Kalinov bridge in Motif-index, see Thompson A672.2, A673, A986, B11.6.4, B11.6.6, B549.2, C93.4, E481.2.1, F152, F152.0.1, F152.1.1, F152.2, G424.

66. ATU 300A; AT 300A, 301, 471; SUS 300A = AA300*B.

67. Barag 1981, 181-182.

68. On river as boundary with the other world, see Eremina 1984, 195-204; 1991, 149-161; Toporov 1992, 374-376; Mencej 1998, 205-224.

the Smorodina river for the kidnapped princess resembles a marriage ritual, the winner in which received the hand of the bride and became the ruler in the kingdom. At the same time, the Serpent's attacks could be considered as attempts of hostile forces to intrude into the Russian realm that entailed death, illness and other misfortunes.

The boundary between the worlds is depicted in the series of fairy tales of Ivan – peasant's son and Čudo Yudo. The most elaborated of them are the fairytales "Burja Bogatyr, Ivan the Cow's Son" and "Ivan Bykovič (Bull's son)"⁶⁹. The hero-protagonist, accompanied with two his brothers, trice fight against three many-headed monsters, who try to intrude into the Russian country on the Kalinov bridge over the Smorodina river. The snake-like monsters, who however is able to mount the horse, bear the name Čudo Yudo, which etymology is quite complex. A.N. Afanasiev pointed out to the folk tale about the Sea King, whose role in several versions is transferred to a serpent, a devil, or the lawless Čudo Yudo. The ambiguous characteristic of the Sea King manifests both his demonic and beneficent nature of the overlord of rain clouds, which dim the heavenly light and often harm the accumulation of harvests. The name Čudo Yudo is based on the association of heavenly clouds with a mythical serpent (dragon). The word Čudo "miracle" (monster = marvel) seems to be the obsolete "giant", which image was associated with the personification of the mighty forces of nature (whirlwinds, storm and thunderstorm) at the time when the religious-poetic views dominated⁷⁰.

M. Vasmer assumed the relationship of Čudo with the Greek κῦδος "glory, honor", a variable basis, as the Greek πένθος: πάθος; also κῦδρός "glorious". In addition, the word was associated with the Old-Indian *ā-kūtiṣ* "intention", *kaviṣ* "teacher, sage"⁷¹. D.V. Bubrikh derived the collocation Čudo Yudo from the combination of the German ethnonyms 'Teutones' and 'Juthungi'⁷². The word Čudo can be akin to the chronicle folk-name Čud' derived from the Gothic word *þiuda* (folk)⁷³. However, both assumptions were not developed in scholarship.

According to Afanasiev, Yudo is derived from *Judas*: in the period of Christian-

69. Afanasiev № 136, 137, cf. UTA 532*, AT 301, SUS 511B*.

70. Afanasiev 1995, II, 112; Slovar' 1861, II, 570.

71. Vasmer 2004, 528.

72. Bubrikh 1926, 53–92.

73. See Sam. *tshudde* or *čudde*, Lith. *tautà*, Lat. *tàuta*, Old-Prus. *tauto*, Gall. *teuta*, Irel. *tùath*, Osc. *touto*, Umbr. *tuta*, Icel. *þjóð*, Eng. *þeod*, Sax. *thiod*, Cimr. *tud*.

ity this name began to give the devil and other demonic creatures. M. Vasmer believed that Yudo more likely is “just a rhyming formation on the model of the word Čudo.” However, the juxtaposition of Yudo with the Sanskrit *jadas* to designate a sea animal, especially a mythical one, in the sense of “wonder of the sea” has received more development⁷⁴. Indeed, Čudo Yudo is associated with the water element, always appearing from the water. Long ago attention was drawn to the mythical female creature in Bulgarian and Macedonian mythology named *juda/jyda*, having an evil character, which lives in the mountains or by the lakes and which fly as a whirlwind⁷⁵. The *judas* are hostile to people and, seeing someone bathing, entangle them with their long hair, like nets; those caught are tortured in various ways, and with special pleasure they tear out their eyes. In Ukraine, the term *juda* meant some kind of evil spirit. According to O.N. Trubačev, both words, *juda* and *Yudo*, ascending to the Proto-Slavic form **juda*, are associated with the Sanskrit *yodhá* and the Proto-Indo-European **ioudh-* (ESSJa 1981, VIII, 191). G. Iljinskij brought together the Bulgarian *juda* “mermaid, sorceress” with the Polish *judzić* “irritate, poison, incite”, Lithuanian *judis* “mobile”, *judėti*, *judù* “to move”, *jaudà* “temptation”, *jáudinti* “to excite, tempt”, Old-Indian *ud-yōdhati* “jumps up in anger”, *yūdhyatē* “fights”, Latin *iubeō*, *-ēre* “command”. In his interpretation, the pra-Slavic **judō* defined not only a “restless, quarrelsome” being, but rather a “creature that combines mighty strength with deceit”, although this nuance does not exhaust the whole complex of features that made up the meaning of this adjective⁷⁶. One of the favorite motifs of Bulgarian songs or fairy tales is a story about the struggle or competition of *juda* with any *junak*, or sometimes even a simple shepherd. But the idea of a “stormy, fierce and all-destroying creature” is especially well suited to the portrait of Sea King of Russian fairy tales; dancing on the bottom of the sea, he raises such waves that no ship can fight. Such a powerful water creature fully deserves the epithet of Čudo Yudo, that is, ‘a monster that produces a storm’⁷⁷.

The fairy tales depict Čudo Yudo on a black horse, with a black crow on his shoulder and a black hound (or wolf) alongside his stirrup. Upon learning of the approach to the hero, who was waiting for the enemy under the Kalinov bridge

74. *Polnyj tserkovno-slavjanskij slovar* 1899, II, 827, 843.

75. For *juda* and *vila*, see Angelov 1911, 1-66; Barber 1997, 6-47.

76. *Juda* can be compared with *Juturna* (*Diuturna*), the Roman goddess/nymph of fountains, wells and springs. The goddess was somehow related to Jupiter (*Iuppiter*, but *Iovis*, and *Dius*).

77. Iljinskij 1933, 467–474.

(“guessing the Russian spirit”), “Čudo Yudo’s black horse stumbled, the black hound bristled, the black raven started up”. The black horse was revered in the temple of Triglav (“Three-headed”), which was located in the city of Szczecin at the mouth of the Oder River:

«Now the people possessed a horse of great size which was plump, dark-coloured and very spirited. It did no work throughout the year and was regarded as being so holy that no one was worthy to ride it. It had also as its attentive guardian one of the four priests who were attached to the temples. Whenever the people contemplated setting out on any expedition by land to attack their enemies, or in order to secure booty, they were accustomed to forecast the result in this way. Nine spears were placed on the ground separated from one another by the space of a cubit. When then the horse had been made ready and was bridled, the priest, who was in charge of it, led the horse three times backwards and forwards across the spears that were lying on the ground. If the horse crossed without knocking its feet or disturbing the spears, they regarded this as an omen of success and proceeded on their expedition without anxiety, but if the result were otherwise they remained inactive»⁷⁸.

The stumbling temple horse of Triglav foreshadowed an unsuccessful campaign, but Čudo Yudo neglected the prediction, entered the battle and was defeated. The monster lives in stone chambers, where he has witch wives and a snake-mother. It appears on the Kalinov bridge only at night, which is his own time. The world, in which the chambers of Čudo Yudo situate, is separated by a water barrier from the world of the hero. In fairy tales, Čudo Yudo either comes out of the water or rides horseback across the bridge. It is why he is sometimes called as Sea King. The place of residence of Čudo Yudo is beyond the Smorodina river, the Kalinov bridge across which, perhaps, was associated with the word “okolet’, okolevat’” (to die). To go to the other side of the river of death meant “to die”. On the bank of the river, human bones are knee-deep piled. It is possible that Čudo Yudo’s mother, who pursued the hero after her son’s death, may be associated with the Hindu goddess Kali⁷⁹. The black color of Čudo Yudo’s attendants, as well as its own three-headed nature, make it possible to see in the

78. Robinson 1920, 79-80 (Herbordus II. 33).

79. The Kalinov bridge is also associated with the Old-Russian male name ‘Kalin (Kalina)’. In the bylina ‘Ilja Murometz and Kalin-Tzar’, Kalin Kalinovič headed the Tartars who besieged Kiev. See Bailey, Ivanova 1998, 52-68; Propp 1999, 291-368.

creature a replica of the gods Triglav⁸⁰ and Černobog⁸¹, venerated by the Western Slavs. A.H. Afanasiev identified Triglav with enigmatic Trojan, known in several Russian medieval apocrypha and in “Tale of Igor’s Campaign” (*Slovo o plǫku Igorevǝ*)⁸². The name Černobog (Black god) made him related to deities of death and associates him with Velesъ, the god of the underworld⁸³.

Čudo Yudo’s habitation resembles Rethra, the sacred city of the Western Slavs (Lutiči/Veleti, Redarii). The city was described by Adam of Bremen (*Gesta Hammaburgensis ecclesiae pontificum* II. 22 (18), Helmold of Bosau (*Chronica Slavorum* I. 2) and Thietmar of Merseburg (*Chronicon* VI. 23 (17). In Rethra there was a large temple for the gods, the main of which, according to Adam and Helmold, was Redegast. Thietmar writes that Redegast was the city name, but the god was named Svarožič (*Zuarasici*). Perhaps Adam mistakenly put the Slavic toponym (Radogošč - Radogost / Redigast) instead of the god name⁸⁴. The name Svarožič sounds as Svarog with patronymic ending (Svarog’s son). Hypatian Chronicle, under the year 1114, mentions Svarog as the father of Dažbog (PSRL 2, 274-276). In this case, Svarožič and Svarog related to the Sanskrit *Svarga* and Persian *xwar*. More likely, however, the name Svarožič is from the Old Germanic *svartaz (German ‘schwarz’ that is ‘black’). J. Kalik and A. Uchitel suggests that *svartaz could be transformed into *svarzat through the metathesis of t and z, and then into ‘svarožič’. If this identification is correct, Svarožič could be the same as Černobog (Black god)⁸⁵.

The idol of Svarožič was made of gold, and a bed of purple. There was nothing in the city but a sanctuary, skillfully built of wood, the walls of which were dec-

80. Robinson 1920, 78, 110; Trkanjec 2013, 9-19; Dynda 2014, 57–82; Zochios 2019, 79-88.

81. Helmold *Cronica Slavorum* I. 52: “There is also another strange delusion of the Slavs: in their feasts and binges they pass along a bowl in where they utter words, I will not say of consecration but of execration, in the name of the gods, the good and the evil, trusting that all this happiness is ordered by the good god, and the misfortune by the evil god. For this reason, they call the evil god in their language Diabol or Zcerneboch [Černobog], that is, the black god”.

82. Afanasiev 1968, II, 642-643.

83. See Zochios 2019, 80, 83, 85; Rosik 2020, 310-323.

84. A total of 40 toponyms related to Radogošč (Radegast, Radigošť, Radogošč, Radogošča) are determined within the area of Slavic settlements, from the Elbe to the upper reaches of the Oka, and from the Baltic Sea to the Middle Danube. See Zaikouski 2011, 168-183; cf. Rosik 2020, 93-133.

85. Kalik, Uchitel 2019, 46-51.

orated with intricately carved images of various gods and goddesses. The city was surrounded by a deep lake, and to reach the sanctuary was possible on the only wooden bridge. This path along the bridge was allowed only to those who made sacrifices or wished to receive an answer from the oracle (Adam *Gesta* II. 21; Thietmar *Chronicon* VI. 17).

The three-faced god was also revered in the Slavic city of Jumna (Jumneta, Vineta) in Pomerania. Adam of Bremen (*Gesta* II.22 (19) compares the god with Neptune and Vulcan⁸⁶. Some features of this deity allow us to see in him a resemblance to the Vedic Varuna, the god of water and the heavenly Ocean, in which the Earth is immersed⁸⁷. Varuna, the Lord of Oceans (Sea King in Russian fairy tales), was considered the king of the world, gods and people (*Rig Veda* II. 27, 10; V. 85, 3; VII. 87, 6; X. 132, 4). In the later Vedic literature, Varuṇa is associated with the celestial waters, but in the epics he is the overlord of the terrestrial waters, rivers, streams, and lakes, but primarily of the ocean⁸⁸. In Russia, many rivers are called Vorona or Voronja, although the etymological connection of this name with ravens is doubtful. Black was Varuna's trademark⁸⁹. The Russian word 'voronoj' means "of black color". In his mythological career Varuna became the god of the night sky, although his dark associations bring him close to the primarily chthonic gods with the snake connotations. He dwelt in the royal splendor of his underwater palace. Like Poseidon, Varuna is often associated with horses.

Ploughing furrow as a frontier

A.A. Potebnja compared Kožemjaka's plowing land, with the Serpent harnessed to a plow, with the digging of river beds by the Vedic god Indra, who defeated the "great serpent" Vritra⁹⁰. Kožemjaka or, in another version, the divine blacksmiths Kuzma and Damian, who seized the Serpent with iron tongs, plowed a shaft to the Black Sea. The earthen ramparts built on the banks of the Dnieper at the time of Prince Vladimir the Great received in the people memory the name 'Zmievj valy' (Serpent's ramparts)⁹¹.

The topic is also comparable with the plowing by Mikula Seljaninovič in the

86. Dynda 2014, 59-64; Zochios 2019, 87; Rosik 2020, 230-231.

87. Apte 1946, 136-156; Piyel 2012, 382-401.

88. Lüders 1951, I: Varuṇa und die Wasser.

89. Ivanković 2019, 66.

90. Potebnja 1865, 11-12.

91. See Ilovajskij 2002, 284-285.

bylina “Vol’gá /Volkha and Mikula”. The epic story tells us about the meeting of a young prince Volkha, with his retinue hurrying about his business, and the mighty plowman (*‘rataj’*) Mikula, who in several trials puts the prince’s attendants to shame. Mikula Seljaninovič had been plowing the field using his gilded bipod, when Volkha Svjatoslavič observed him and, together with his squad, headed towards him. However, they could not reach the plowman during the whole day, not could do that in the next day, and only on the third day they caught up with him. When the prince invited Mikula to join his retinue and ride with them, he asked the prince’s companions to get his plow out of the ground, shake the stones and lumps out of the plowshares (*omešiks*), and throw the plow behind the willow bush. However, the whole mighty squad tried its strength but could not do anything. Then, the plowman himself picked the plow up from the ground and throw it in a such manner that it flew high under the clouds.

‘Meeting with a gigantic plowman’ is the motive of both epos and fairytales [UTA 650B, 701; AT 650A¹, 650B¹, cf. 1003]. The Abkhazian version of the Nart epos has the similar account of the hero Sosryqwa’s meeting with a giant plowman, plowing on 12 bulls⁹². Sosryqwa greets him several times, but does not receive an answer. Furthermore, being irritated by Sosryqwa’s importunity, the plowman grabs him together with his horse and shoves him under a clod of earth. Then the giant turned up to his plow and continued plowing⁹³. The gigantic plowman is described as “semi-raw-semi-dry” that indicates his chthonic nature. After some adventures, when Sosryqwa could watch the duel of the plowman with another giant and he himself played the role of a toy for the plowman’s children, he befriended the monstrous creature. The plowman told him that at once he had met a man so great in comparison with him as he himself was in comparison with Sosryqwa. Thus, he made it clear to the hero that there will always be someone who is stronger than the strong. The explanation holds in itself the idea of multiplicity of world among which the world of Sosryqwa is not the largest. The young age of Volkha and his fellow companions shows that they were at the stage of youth initiation and occurred in the Netherworld, which was different from their own one.

Unlike Kožemjaka, who himself plows on the tamed Serpent, Volkha and Sosry-

92. Džapua 2003, 68-74, 240-243; Ardzinba 2015, 41-45, 75, 84, 86. The tale is known in 27 versions.

93. The Caucasian residents, for whom the Nart hero Sasryqwa (Soslan, Sosuruq) is well-known, see traces of this plowing in either local riverbed, or a deep ravine, which resemble a “ditch like a thousand-year-old trail”.

qwa does not ploughing themselves. This role belongs to Mikula Seljaninovič and the enormous plowman in the Nart Epos, both of whom demonstrate their superiority over the hero-protagonist. At the first sight, the epic stories show prevalence of the ordinary peasant and his agricultural work over the prince and his occupation, especially since the name ‘*Seljaninovič*’ from ‘*Seljanin*’ that is ‘peasant, villager’⁹⁴. Within the three-functional ideology by G. Dumézil the ploughing motifs are usually interpreted as a symbolic expression for the third function of fertility and production. However, Russian epic demonstrates Mikula’s obvious prevalence over the most famous bogatyrs, Svjatogor and Ilja Murometz. Wandering beggars give an advice to Ilja Murometz not to enter into the single combat with Mikula’s kinship, because it is “Mat’ Syra Zemlja who loves Mikula” (Rybnikov I, 35). Taking the words literally, one can see in Mikula a lover of Mother-Goddess (plough as the male organ). The epic plowman, as well as the Zmej-Serpent, is a being of the Netherworld, an embodiment of Velesъ, and his supremacy over the hero-protagonist forces us to seek another explanation for his mythological role.

One can suggest that, in an archaic myth, the Serpent himself was a plowman, who supervised the world cultivating by him. It seems that the Serpent / Velesъ was the only ruler on the Earth in any time, before the hero created a cultural space, surrounding it by a furrow. The primordial god plays the role of ancestor for the next generation, and, therefore, for the hero. The Athenian progenitor Cecrops was portrayed as a half-man, half-snake or dragon, but in the popular belief he had a pure serpentine appearance. In Greek mythology, Cadmus founded Thebes in Boeotia by killing a dragon and marrying his daughter Harmony. At the end of their lives, they both turned into serpents⁹⁵. For the East-European farmer, the Serpent’s world was all the more attractive because of extensive agriculture, which was the economy basis, required periodic departure into this world in order to acquire a new land and other resources. The farmer himself periodically acted as a kind of Serpent-fighter, and his goal was not to destroy the Serpent, but to domesticate a certain part of his possessions. At the same time, the Serpent did not remain in debt, occupying the fields abandoned by the farmer and attaching them to his cosmic possessions. In archaic mythologies, the Hero and the Serpent had to converge constantly in the battle on the Kalinov bridge as the border of their domains. The struggle with the Serpent was waged from century to century in order to receive more new values from his world⁹⁶.

94. See Mazon 1931, 149-170; Propp 1999, 374-388.

95. Propp 1986, 276.

96. The idea can be seen in the Greek myth of Jason, who organized the Argonaut ex-

Therefore, the Serpent was considered by ancient people as a useful creature, a kind of 'good Serpent'. This view is reflected in the numerous evidences of the Serpent's veneration in Russian folk culture. Also in Serbian beliefs, the Serpent often acts as a positive character, the protector of his relatives, the hero defeating against the demons of bad weather and providing good weather and a harvest⁹⁷. In his holiness, the Serpent is not inferior to God himself and the saints.

V.Ja. Propp suggested that before the Hero Serpent-slayer appeared, the fairytale princess was intended for the Serpent / Košćej (actually, Velesъ), who needed in a spouse because was alone in the world. Many legendary heroes were born from an intercourse of a woman with the Serpent. The marriage of a girl with the Serpent or deity, representing his chthonic nature, contributed to the prosperity of nature and was an early version of the Sacred Marriage. As a carrier of the fertilizing force, the Serpent was often symbolically depicted as a phallus. Many peoples have a belief that if a snake is seen near a woman, this is a sure sign that she conceived. The relations of Demeter with Iasion in a field where there had been triple ploughing show that the so-called 'thrice-ploughed' or, more correctly 'triple-furrowed' field was the scene of ritual observances. In some places of Southeast Asia, it is still believed that intercourse in the fields makes them more fertile and even it is the custom for man and wife to have intercourse in their garden. There are survivals of this practice in Europe today. The primitive pointed plough was thought of as representing the male organ penetrating and fertilizing Mother Earth, and as the ploughman was usurping the rights of the Sky god his anger had to be appeased by means of sacrifices and appropriate ritual⁹⁸. The idea goes back to the myth of the marriage between Heaven and Earth, which is regarded as the source of fecundity.

According to Herodotus (IV. 5-9), the Scythians who practiced agriculture were descendants of the youngest son of the first king Targitaos⁹⁹. Targitaos had three sons, named Lipoxais, Arpoxais, and Colaxais, who each ruled a different part of the kingdom. One day at the time of their reign, four golden objects fell from

pedition to Colchis to obtain the Golden Fleece. Jason fights with the army, which grew out of the earth after Jason plowed it on the defeated and harnessed dragon (Apollonius Rhodius, *Argonautika*, III. 1277-1360). Cf. UTA 532*: With the help of a (two, several) magic ox (cow), a boy plows the copper (iron, stone) field of the king. He marries the princess and receives (half of) the kingdom.

97. See Jakobson, Ružičić 1950, 343-355.

98. Armstrong 1943, 255.

99. Bukharin 2013, 20-80; Lincoln 2014, 19-34.

the sky, a plow, a yoke, an axe and a bowl. When the brothers tried to pick up the gold, only Colaxais succeeded and became the king of the Royal Scythians. Some scholars suggest that the plow was the symbol of royal power¹⁰⁰. Several early kings are known as ploughmen, for instance, Czech Přemysl, Polish Piast, and Hungarian St. Stephen or Matej Korvín¹⁰¹. The name Mikula is a folk version of the name of St. Nicholas (Slav. Mikuláš), the protector of Russian people¹⁰². Ploughing rituals performed by kings or noblemen were spread in Medieval England and Scotland¹⁰³. Norse mythology contains references to the goddess Gefjon (Gefion), who at once was sent by Odin north to look for new land. She took the form of a beggar woman and was told by king Gylfi (of Sweden) that she could claim as much land as she could plow in a day and night. Gefjon then bore four sons from a jötunn, turned them into oxen and attached them to a plow. She then carved off a large piece of land and created the island Zealand¹⁰⁴. The Royal Ploughing Ceremony was spread in ancient India, and therefrom it was introduced to Southeast Asia, being known in Cambodia, Myanmar (Burma), Thailand¹⁰⁵. The earliest historical account of this royal ritual in known in ancient Indian epic Ramayana (I. 66. 14), in which various versions, King Janaka found the heroine Sita as a baby in a furrow, when he was ploughing the field during the ceremony¹⁰⁶.

M. Golema has recently pointed that, in comparison with Mikula's ploughing the field, the Russian (Old Slavic) serpent-slayers/tamers draw a furrow to separate domains with the Serpent¹⁰⁷. From the one hand, by ploughing the Hero divided the world with the Serpent, conquering part of the latter's possessions. Their joint ploughing, when the Serpent was temporarily tamed by the Hero,

100. See Ilovajskij 2002, 282-283. Mazon 1931, 160, calls Colaxais "le prince de la char-rue" (the prince of the plow).

101. See Golema 2007, 166-175; Lajoye 2019, 171-172.

102. Toporov 1983, 107; Uspenskij 1982, 18-20.

103. Davidson 1959, 27-37.

104. See Armstrong 1943, 250-257.

105. Wojtilla 1986, 193-199.

106. The name of Sita means 'furrow', and there can be little doubt that the story is based on ritual. It will be remembered that Demeter bore Ploutos to Iasion in a "thrice-ploughed furrow" (Hesiod, *Theogony*, 971 ff.), and in the Etruscan myth, Tages was found in a furrow by Tarchon when ploughing near Tarquinii. It is unlikely that these stories are independent of each other.

107. Golema 2007, 160-166, 170-175.

has the goal to draw the furrow as a border between their domains, between the cultural world and wild chaos. The mythopoetic ploughing was a liturgical act of establishing cosmos out of chaos by dividing the latter into two zones, which in ancient India were domains of Mithra and Varuna¹⁰⁸. The cosmological space was organized around of a sacred fire, as it is depicted in the Vedic ritual of ploughing describing by *Shatapatha Brahmana* (VII. 2. 2. 12). In Greek and Roman tradition, the goddess Hestia and Vesta represented the “city’s common fire”, and their fireplace was the ritual center of the city. Among the Scythians, the role of ritual center belonged to the royal fireplace¹⁰⁹. In Slavonic oral tradition, the family fireplace functions as a sacred center of the house¹¹⁰.

Ploughing a certain space around provides the allotted area with a clear structure and, thus, shapes the world out of unbeing. The modelling ritual of Rome’s founding is depicted as Romulus’ ploughing a furrow around the future city, separating the sacred urban space from the external world¹¹¹. The ploughing ceremony was performed by bronze plough, which was also used at the founding of Etruscan cities (Macrobius, *Saturnalia*, V. 19. 13)¹¹². The ritual separated the cultural human space, designed for auspices and prayers to the gods, from the uncivilized area, left to foreigners, barbarians, hermits and wild animals. The furrow functioned as a magic equivalent of fortification; the border cannot be crossed without aftermath. The ‘ploughing around’ was preserved among the Slavs until the XIX century as a magic rite to separate and protect a certain cultural space (usually villages) and the inhabitants of it from plague, epidemics and life destruction¹¹³. Similar rite in ancient Rome was called *Suovetaurilia* (Cato, *De agricultura* 141)¹¹⁴. Volkha and Mikula represented a poetical Slavic analogy for Mithra and Varuna (Perunъ/Dažbog and Velesъ), whose later equivalents

108. Golema 2007, 166-167 on Mithra as “a delineator of borders”.

109. Herodotus IV. 68: “According to Scythian habits, one takes an oath on a royal fireplace when promising a most important oath”.

110. Bajburin 1983, 125-76; Tzivjan 1978, 65-85.

111. Varro, *De Lingua Latina*, V.143; Plutarch, *Romulus*, 11.4; *Questiones Romanes*, 27; Festus p. 294 L; Lucan, *Pharsalia*, I. 594; Livy, *Ab Urbe condita*, I. 44; Tacitus, *Annales*, XII. 24; Aulus Gellius, *Noctes Atticae*, XIII. 14. 1.

112. De Sanctis 2019, 19-38.

113. Žuravlev 1978, 71-94.

114. Scholz 1973, 3-28; Watkins 1995, 197-213; Woodard 2006, 103-106: *Suovetaurilia*, 152-153: ploughing.

were the Orthodoxian saints Ilja and Nikolas¹¹⁵.

From the other hand, the joint ploughing of the Hero and the Serpent can be understood in the sense that they divide sovereignty for human and divine spaces. The agreement between the Hero and the Serpent suggests that each of them has his own area for ruling, a part of sovereignty. The joint pair of sovereigns is represented in the divine world as Mithra/Indra and Varuna, Dažbog/Perunъ and Velesъ, while in human world they were prince/king (*knjaz*, *rex*, *raja*) and supreme priest (*vokhv*, *brahman*, *pontifex maximus*)¹¹⁶. Within Dumézil's three-functional ideology they (and the motif of ploughing) symbolize the first function of sovereignty rather, than the third function of fertility and production. The archaic Indo-European idea of binary sovereignty had their religious and secular branches. While the *bylina* depicts a folk perceiving of the meeting between a prince and a ploughing peasant, in mythological space Mikula is represented as a sacred ruler (priest) and Volkha as a ritual ruler (king / prince). Mikula, having accomplished his ploughing, joint to Volkha, and they together (as Nikita and Zmej) departed to collect taxes and look after the keeping law in three Russian towns, the center of the Russian country¹¹⁷. The Primary Chronicle under the year 907 refers to: "Thus the Emperors Leo and Alexander made peace with Oleg, and after agreeing upon the tribute and mutually binding themselves by oath, they kissed the cross, and invited Oleg and his men to swear an oath likewise. According to the religion of the Russes, the latter swore by their weapons and by their god Perun, as well as by Volos, the god of cattle, and thus confirmed the treaty" (Primary Chronicle 1953, 65). Thus, as the god of princely retinue, Perunъ played the role of an earthly representative of the celestial Dažbog, while Velesъ was the deity of ordinary people.

Hero Serpent-slayer and rites of initiation

The main epic Serpent-slayer is Dobrynja Nikitič. His father was Nikita Romanovič, Prince Vladimir's reliable fellow (Byliny Pečory № 43, 51, 53). T.N. Kondratjeva argues that there is "every reason to compare him with the Ser-

115. See Uspenskij 1982, 34-35.

116. The term *rex*, derived from **rēg-*, *regere* – 'to cut, to draw a line or to separate', is the title for the person who draws a line which separates a part of space (*regio*) from the cosmos as a whole. See Benveniste 1969, 9-15.

117. The historical 'Russian country' was modelled as trifold structure with three main cities. After Svjatoslav Igorevič they were Kiev, Ovruch, and a certain Novgorod, while after Prince Jaroslav the Wise - Kiev, Černigov, and Pereslavl.

pent fighter Nikita Kožemjaka”, since he is quite suitable “for the role of the Serpent-slayer ancestor”, transferring his knowledge to his son¹¹⁸. The young age of Kožemjaka, defeated a Pecheneg, allows suggesting that his feat was his first initiation test. Similarly, his son Dobrynja, when he entered the time of initiation at the age of 12-15, goes to the Pučaj river, where he faces the threat of being swallowed by the Serpent¹¹⁹.

“Here the young Dobrynjuška wished to
Swim in the Pučaj River, to dive.
There at that season, at that time
Yes, from afar-far, out of the open field,
From under the eastern yes from under the side,
Yes, and it is not the rain that is raining, and even it is not the thunder that
rumbles,
And it is not thunder that rumbles, but the noise is great:
It is swoop upon the young Dobrynjuška
Ah! and the Serpentine ah! and the Goryniščo,
Ah! and a snake about three heads,
About twelve she is about trunks;
She has swoop upon the young Dobrynjuška,
And spoke the snake such the words:
- And now Dobrynjuška is in my hands,
And in my hands, yes, he is in my will!” (Hilferding № 59)

The struggle with the Serpent is a symbolic description of the initiation, which went back to the myth of the primeval hero descending into the chthonic abyss of the Netherworld, to the border with the primordial chaos, in order to bring its energy for renewing of the cultural world. The hero's feat served as a model that inspired young people during the trials that every neophyte must endure in order to receive initiation¹²⁰. At the same time the hero's achievement is a ritual paradigm for each new generation. The symbolic stay in the other world

118. Kondratjeva 1967, 50-51.

119. On hero's swimming, see Frojanov, Yudin 1997, 23-24, 26, 517-531.

120. For Hero's visiting the Netherworld (of death) as a symbol of initiation, see Propp 1986, 263-266.

during the initiations gave the youth the knowledge to reborn in a new, more perfect guise. Prince Oleg of Kyiv had the nickname 'Prophetic' (*Veščij*), which represents him as a seer, who possessed certain knowledge inaccessible to ordinary people¹²¹. The Old-Russian word *veščij*, with the meaning *vedajuščij* (from *vedat'* - to know/manage), is akin to the Indian 'Vedas' (from *véda* - knowledge, wisdom)¹²². Association between *Veščij*, *vedat'* and *Velesъ* shows that neophytes in their searching the knowledge are for the kingdom of *Velesъ*.

In the bylina "Volkh Vseslavjevič" the hero possesses the ability to transform himself into an animal, to understand beasts' language, and to reach the otherworld¹²³. He acquires the abilities in the age of the transition from childhood to adulthood:

"And when Volkh was ten years old,
At that time he was taught several wisdoms:
The first wisdom he studied
Was how to turn himself into a bright falcon,
The second wisdom Volkh studied
Was how to turn himself into a gray wolf,
The third wisdom Volkh studied
Was how to turn himself into a bay aurochs with golden horns.
And when Volkh was twelve years old,
He started gathering himself a družina,
He gathered a družina for three years,
He collected a družina of seven thousand.
Volkh himself was fifteen years old,
And all his družina was fifteen years old."¹²⁴

V.G. Balušok emphasizes the age of the hero and his companions: Volkh left

121. *Primary chronicle* 1953, 65: "The people called Oleg 'the Sage', for they were but pagans, and therefore ignorant". Oleg dead of a snakebite which had been prophesied by a pagan priest (Volkhv). See Nekljudov 2010, 366-395. In apocryphal 'History of the beginning of the Russian country', Prince Izbor who ruled the Chude country dead of a snakebite. See Azbelev 1963, 18-19.

122. Oleg *Veščij* as well as Boyan *Veščij* in the "Tale of Igor's Campaign" (*Slovo o plъku Igorevѣ*) has the meaning 'competent' from the Indo-European *woyd- 'to know/man-age', 'wise' in a supernatural sense. See Fischer 1970, 152-153.

123. On the etymology of the names Volkh and Vol'ga, see Nosov 2011, 78-88.

124. Bailey, Ivanova 1998, 3-11 (lines 42-55); Kirša Danilov №. 40.

his house being of “ten years old”, assembled a band (a youth union) being of “twelve years” and taught his attendants to the military and hunting ‘wisdom’ until they achieved “fifteen years”¹²⁵. The epic Volkhá, who “has been swimming in the blue seas as a fish pike, wandering in the dark forests as a grey wolf” and “flying in the clear skies as a falcon”, reminds a young prince in the liminal phase of initiation, when he demonstrates his ability to reincarnating¹²⁶. In the bylina “Volkhá and Mikula”, the heroes represent two different age groups. Mikula belongs to the generation of householders, who are engaged in peasant labour and have no time “to scour the fields and forests” in search of pleasures. Volkhá and his “brave *družinuška* courageous”, who are not able to pick up Mikula’s “maple plow”, are young men who has not yet reached the status of householders¹²⁷. Volkhá tells Mikula that he “has not yet learned this wisdom to plow (*orati*)” and he is not engaged in peasantry; “And my retinue (*družinuška*) is all young, / A young all unreliable”, he says¹²⁸. The symbolism of initiation, reflected in various folklore forms, demonstrates main purpose of it:

“And went Volkhá gent Buslavlevič
 Learn all sorts of tricks, wisdom,
 All languages he various;
 Is going Volkhá gent Buslavlevič for seven years,
 But he lived for twelve years,
 Learned tricks-wisdoms,
 All various languages.
 He gathered a družina for himself,
 A good družina, brave,
 And thirty heroes without one,
 He himself became thirties:
 ... And Volkhá turned, gent Buslavlevič,
 Turned into a grey wolf
 ... And Volkhá turned, gent Buslavlevič
 Into small ermine

125. Balušok 1993, 57-66; 1996, 92-98.

126. See Jakobson, Szefel 1966, 301-368.

127. For the young age of Russian epic bogatyrs, see Lipetz 1969, 97-99; Smolitzky 1971, 187; Frojanov, Judin 1997, 517; Balušok 1996, 93.

128. *Byliny Pudožskogo kraja* № 2 and № 129.

.... Here Volkhá gent Buslavlevič,
 Volkhá turned gent Buslavlevič
 ... And he turned into a good fellow
 And he will be with his retinue with good ... (Hilferding № 91)

In myths and folklore, youth initiation was interpreted as communication with the Serpent¹²⁹. In a fairy tale from Vjatka, a snake, wrapped around the neck of the hero, “does not sting, but crushes”, and the hero gains omniscience (Zelenin № 106). The energy of the chthonic abyss added new qualities to people. The leader elected by the people must visit the chthonic world to become a legitimate king. The initiation of the future ruler occupies an important place in the myths of many nations. Kronos, devouring his children and regurgitating them again, by this act gives them divinity. An analogue of the mythological ‘devouring’ by a monster was the placement of a future hero or king in wild nature, into a forest, up a mountain, throwing him into a river as the gates to the Netherworld (Sargon of Akkad, the Persian king Cyrus, the Trojan prince Paris, the Biblical Moses, the Roman founders Romulus and Remus, etc.). Hero’s adventures in a certain distant ‘tree-ninth kingdom’ had the meaning of the ritual descent into the chthonic abyss, into the bosom that gave birth to the primordial world. The Russian fairytale theme of reforging the aged people into young ones by a blacksmith is associated with the initiation rites¹³⁰. In mythology, the blacksmith acted as a demiurgic character endowed with a supernatural creative power. The connection of initiations with blacksmiths was determined by their attitude to the fiery element, which the initiates had to go through in order to get into the ‘other world’. The chthonic Serpent, associated with the kingdom of death, simultaneously had a connection with birth, which symbolizes the ritual of transition during initiation, rebirth from a child into a man. A hero could be the only those who was born by a serpent (i.e., who performed the initiation).

V.Ja. Propp draws attention that, in fairy tales, the Serpent has not yet seen the Hero but somehow knows about his existence and that he himself will die from his very hand¹³¹. The Serpent knows, because “people prophesied to him” that it would be the *bogatyr* Dobrynja, who win in their single combat (Byliny Pudožskogo kraja № 21). Moreover, the Serpent cannot die in any other way, he is im-

129. Propp 1986, 55, 57, 64, 98, 109, 137-138, 225-243, 352-355.

130. See Gippius 1929, 24; Propp 1986, 101.

131. Propp 1986, 221, 274-279; Petrov 2008, 114.

mortal and invincible. Between the Hero and the Serpent there is some kind of connection that began somewhere outside the story: “In the whole world there is no other rival for me, except Ivan Tzarevich... but he is still young, even a raven will not bring his bones to this place” (Afanasiev № 129, 560). This knowledge is akin to Hera’s knowledge of the future exploits of Hercules and his murdering of the monsters raised by her. Apparently, this was possible only if the goddess (like the Serpent) herself participated in the birth of the hero.

Some fairy tales allude that Hero could defeat the Serpent, if only he himself was Serpent’s offspring¹³². The taming of the Serpent could not be accomplished by an ordinary human, but only his son was able to do that. In Herodotus’ ‘Greek’ version of the Scythians origin, the cultural hero Herakles replaced Targitaos as the husband of the girl-serpent, who became the mother-progenitrix of Scythian kings. The Russian epic hero Volkh Vseslavjevič was the son of a serpent and the princess Marfa Vseslavjevna¹³³:

“Through the garden, through the green garden,
Walked and strolled the young Princess Marfa Vseslavjevna,
She jumped from a stone on a fierce serpent.
The fierce serpent coiled itself
Around her green morocco leather boot,
And around her silken stocking,
With its tail it beat along her white thigh.
At that time the princess became pregnant,
She became pregnant and bore a child.
In the sky the bright moon was shining,
In Kiev a mighty bogatyr was born,
The young Volkh Vseslavjevič.”¹³⁴

A predestination that the Serpent will be defeated only by the one who was born from the Serpent means: who has successfully passed the initiation. It was why the Serpent knew in advance who will be ‘adversary’ and has had the knowledge of his arrival. The transformation of the hero, the future Serpent-slayer,

132. See Petrov 2008, 94-97, 254-255.

133. See Jakobson, Szeffel 1949, 83.

134. Bailey, Ivanova 1998, 3-11; cf. Kirša Danilov № 6.

into the Serpent's copy symbolizes the endlessness of the reincarnation process. The world in which this idea arose is already so old, and the original cosmogonic act has already been repeated so many times in rituals that it is impossible to separate its beginning and end.

During the fighting with Hero, Serpent does not try to kill him with weapons, paws, or teeth, but he tries to "drive him into the damp earth". Apparently, we have an allegorical description of the Serpent's desire to throw the hero into the abyss of the underworld, an analogue of the ancient Greek Tartarus. The Serpent can be destroyed only by cutting off all his heads, which have the same distinctive peculiarity to grow back again as the heads of the Hydra, with which Herakles fought. To make the severed heads do not grow back, they must be burned in the same way as Zeus did with his lightning in his last, decisive battle with the monstrous multi-headed serpent Typhon (Typhoeus), the offspring of Gaia-Earth (Hesiod, *Theogony* 820-868). The Russian mythological monster Čudo Yudo, which described as the six-, nine-, and twelve-headed serpent (*Zmej*), has a 'fiery finger' that helps him to engraft the severed heads: "He cut down nine heads to Čudo Yudo; Čudo Yudo grabbed them, scribbled a fiery finger and the heads grew back again". Only after the fiery finger is hacked off, the hero manages to cut off all the heads (Afanasiev № 137).

During the battle with the Serpent (and there are usually three of them), the hero is accompanied by two his brothers, who usually sleep in a hut. At the decisive moment, the hero throws a glove, hat or boots into the hut, and only for the third time does either the brothers or the horse tied nearby rush to help the hero. This is a constant feature in the depiction of the combat: only an assistant (horse or someone else) can kill the serpent. The hero himself cannot enter into direct contact with the creature of chaos, otherwise he is doomed and will not be able to return to his world. After the battle, the body and head of the snake must be totally destroyed, burned (Afanasiev № 129, 132, 134). Fire acts here as a magical purgative force that carries the remnants of the Serpent back to the underworld.

Also Indra does not accomplish his deed alone, but either he is assisted by Viṣṇu and the storming Maruts, or the defeat of the monster is credited to Trita Āptya. The dragon slayer Trita Āptya is a deity affiliated with water (compare Sanskrit *ap* 'water', *āpah* 'waters'), the 'third' (*trita*) of the Āptya brothers (the other two being, naturally, Ekata 'first' and Dvita 'second' Āptya). The fire deity, Agni, had hidden in the waters, from which he was unwillingly extracted by the gods. The *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* refers to this in the next words: Agni spat on those wa-

ters, from which then emerged Trita Āptya and his brothers. These three then attached themselves to the retinue of Indra, following him in his wanderings. Consonant with their name, the Āptya are affiliated with a ritual of purification which is conducted while pouring water for each of the three brothers in turn¹³⁵.

Russian fairy tales did not preserve the hero's birth from a serpent, but they offer another similar form: the birth from a fish [AT 303]. In many fairy tales, three 'brothers' are born by different mothers, who became pregnant because of eating the magic fish. The three are usually a queen, a maid and a dog or a cow, and the last-born son becomes the hero-protagonist. The idea of giving birth to a hero by a servant or a dog is widespread in Slavic folklore, which indicates its archaic Indo-European origins. The low or animal origin of the folkloric hero is often a required condition for his superiority over his brothers, born by a more noble mother. This motif is often associated with the story of three brothers, two of whom are ordinary people, while the youngest and at first with worst qualities or portion finally becomes the main hero. The fairytale triad of mothers 'queen – servant – cow' goes back to the cult of the Mother Goddess. The sacred cow personifies the Goddess herself and her two co-mothers (queen and priestess) actually acted as her servants. Another version of the folklore triad 'queen – servant – dog' demonstrates the origin of the protagonist from a she-dog.

Hero and cows / bulls

The Nikon chronicle collection calls the young man defeated a huge Pecheneg with the name Jan Usmošvets (Old Russian *usma* - highlighted skin). Before the battle, to prove his athletic strength, the hero tears several bovine skins that are complex together or pulls out with his hand a piece of meat and skin from a bull. The test in the form of fighting a bull is reminiscent of the ancient Greek myth of Theseus and the Minotaur. Theseus took part in the ritual 'games with a bull', the winner of which was allowed to take part in the final duel with a lord of the imperious labyrinth. The skins removed from animals serve as archetypal references to cows and bulls, the sacrifice of which played an important role in Indo-European rituals. This feature brings the fairy tale plot closer to the myth of Hercules getting cows (bulls) of the three-headed Geryon. Amin Razi (16th century) refers to the Russes that "their noble people show interest to the leather craft and do not consider this dirt disgusting"¹³⁶. Thus, the Russian teenager who

135. Woodard 2006, 195, cf. Dumézil 1970, 12–28; Watkins 1995, 313–320, 464–468.

136. Kovalevskij 1956, 45.

defeated a Pecheneg champion (Nikita who defeated the Serpent) could be a noble youth rather, than the son of an ordinary warrior, as the Christian chronicler depicts him in his desire to change the pagan myth he used. According to Ahmad Ibn Rustah (late 9 - early 10th century), "all of them [the Slavs] are worshippers of bulls", and Abu Said Gardizi (11th century) repeats the observation as "they worship a [or the] cow"¹³⁷. O.N. Trubačev points out the tendency in Byzantine historical literature to denote the ten-century Russes with the name 'Tauri' (Ταῦροι) or 'Tauroscythians' (Ταυροσκύθαι)¹³⁸. The name was held by the Taurians, who inhabited the antique Crimea (Taurica / Taurida, Ταυρικὴ). Trubačev derives the name from the Greek ταῦρος (bull), which is akin to the Russian *tur*, the Slavonic **turъ*, the Lithuanian *tauras*, the Old Prussian *tauris*, the Latin *taurus*, the Ireland *tarb*. Cattle was the symbol and standard for the wealth in the Indo-European past. The god Velesъ was associated with wealth and cattle, and he was often called as 'skotij bog' (the cattle god)¹³⁹. Volosъ, as the variant name of Velesъ, has been drawn into etymological connection with the Slavic word *volъ* (ox, bull). Cow horns and skin, that is, a cow or a bull were the deity's symbols. According to Procopius, like other peoples of antiquity, the six-century Slavs sacrificed bulls to the god 'creator of lightning'. This custom was preserved among the Eastern Slavs in the rite of slaughtering the 'Iljinskij bull' on the day of Elijah. Elijah the prophet who controls the thunderstorm in Orthodox belief replaced the pagan Perunъ¹⁴⁰. In the old Russian tradition, the expression 'to pray to the bull' had the meaning 'to sacrifice'. In ancient Indian, Greek and Slavic traditions, there was a custom of replacing the sacrifice of a bull with a sacrificial cake imitating a bull, which is known as 'korovay' (also a wedding male symbol from the ancient name for a bull: **korv-*)¹⁴¹. The cow, which takes care of a poor girl, is a popular personage of the Russian fairy tale "Wee Little Havrošečka" ("The Brown Cow")¹⁴². As attested by the records of the destruction of Velesъ' idols in Russian chronicles, the god was portrayed as a man, sometimes with bull horns on his head, like Vedic Varuṇa, Indra and Parjanya¹⁴³. Like Velesъ and the Lithuanian Vėlnias, Varuṇa is regarded as a pro-

137. Macartney 1968, 211.

138. Trubačev 2005, 178-182.

139. See Ivanov, Toporov 1974, 46-48; Ivanković 2019, 67-69.

140. See Ivanov, Toporov 1974, 169; Gamkrelidze, Ivanov 1995, 493.

141. For the 'korovai-karavai' see Ivanov, Toporov 1974, 244-258.

142. Afanasiev № 100, 101; ATU 511; AT 511A*.

143. Gamkrelidze, Ivanov 1995, 482-493; West 2007, 246.

tector of cattle, 'a strong cow-herd' (*irya go-pā*) and the bearer of the epithet 'bull' (*vr̥ṣabha*)¹⁴⁴.

In Russian fairy tales, the hero-protagonist, who fights the many-headed monster Čudo Yudo on the bridge to the Netherworld, bears the name 'Ivan Bykovič / Korovič' (Ivan the Bull / Cow's son). Some verses of Vedas suggest that the mother of the god Indra was a *grishti* (a cow). Indra was one of the Adityas, son of the goddess Aditi, who was symbolized by a cow within Vedic ritual and called a milch or rain cow (*Rig Veda* I. 153). Vedic hymns often identify Indra with cows and bull (*Rig Veda* I. 10. 10). One of his main feats was rescue of cows. The demons Asuras stolen the heavenly cows and drove them to the edge of the Universe, hiding them in a mountain cave of the demon Vala. Darkness reigned in the world, for the cows were the seven rays of dawn. Indra sent the divine dog Sarama to look for cows, but the demons bribed her with cow's milk, and the dog she told lie to Indra that the lost cows not found. However, the omniscient Indra found the cows, defeated Vala, guarding the cows, and released the heavenly cows (*Rig Veda* I. 6. 5; 7. 3; 11. 5; X. 67. 4-12). The myth is known in Greek version of Herakles and Geryon's cows and in Roman version of Hercules and Cacus, stolen his cows. Searching cows is a spread fairytale motif [AT 313G*, cf. 511A]. In the other hymn Indra defeated the serpent Vritra to release not only water but also cows (*Rig Veda* I. 32. 1-13, trans. R.T.H. Griffith):

"1 I will declare the manly deeds of Indra, the first that he achieved, the Thunder-wielder. He slew the Dragon, then disclosed the waters, and cleft the channels of the mountain torrents.
 2 He slew the Dragon lying on the mountain: his heavenly bolt of thunder Tvaṣṭar fashioned. Like lowing kine in rapid flow descending the waters glided downward to the ocean.
 3 Impetuous as a bull, he chose the Soma and in three sacred beakers drank the juices. Maghavan grasped the thunder for his weapon, and smote to death this firstborn of the dragons.
 4 When, Indra, thou hadst slain the dragon's firstborn, and overcome the charms of the enchanters, Then, giving life to Sun and Dawn and Heaven, thou foundest not one foe to stand against thee.
 5 Indra with his own great and deadly thunder smote into pieces Vṛtra, worst of Vṛtras. As trunks of trees, what time the axe hath felled them, low on the earth so lies the prostrate Dragon.

144. *Rig Veda* VIII. 41. 4; V. 63. 3; Jakobson 1969/1985, 37, 38; Ivanković 2019, 69.

6 He, like a mad weak warrior, challenged Indra, the great impetuous many-slaying Hero. He, brooking not the clashing of the weapons, crushed—Indra's foe—the shattered forts in falling.
 7 Footless and handless still he challenged Indra, who smote him with his bolt between the shoulders. Emasculate yet claiming manly vigour, thus Vṛtra lay with scattered limbs dissevered.
 8 There as he lies like a bank-bursting river, the waters taking courage flow above him. The Dragon lies beneath the feet of torrents which Vṛtra with his greatness had encompassed.
 9 Then humbled was the strength of Vṛtra's mother: Indra hath cast his deadly bolt against her. The mother was above, the son was under and like a cow beside her calf lay Danu.
 10 Rolled in the midst of never-ceasing currents flowing without a rest for ever onward. The waters bear off Vṛtra's nameless body: the foe of Indra sank to during darkness.
 11 Guarded by Ahi stood the thralls of Dāsas, the waters stayed like kine held by the robber. But he, when he had smitten Vṛtra, opened the cave wherein the floods had been imprisoned.
 12 A horse's tail wast thou when he, O Indra, smote on thy bolt; thou, God without a second, Thou hast won back the kine, hast won the Soma; thou hast let loose to flow the Seven Rivers.
 13 Nothing availed him lightning, nothing thunder, hailstorm or mist which had spread around him: When Indra and the Dragon strove in battle, Maghavan gained the victory for ever.”

There is a version in which Ivan the Cow's son, after defeating Čudo Yudo, its wives and mother, meets Čudo's father (Afanasiev № 137). It is chthonic god Veles himself, who cannot appear in his own guise and shows up as a very old fogey, who sees nothing because of his long eyelashes and thick eyebrows completely cover his eyes¹⁴⁵. The old monster gives Ivan the Bull a task to get the princess Golden Curls to marry him. The fairy tale unifies the motif of dragon-slayer with the motif of “six wonderful companions” [AT 300 A + 513 A], who help Ivan to cope with the task. Ivan managed to outwit the deity so that he married the princess himself, while the Čudo's Father fell down into the abyss. Although the tale does not mention the bullish image of Veles, the latter's re-

145. Cf. Ivanković 2019, 67.

lationship with Ivan the Bull are built on the model of father gives his son an impossible mission.

Greek mythology considered Minotaur ('bull of Minos') an offspring of a sexual intercourse between the queen Pasiphae and the divine bull of Poseidon. Minotaur lived the so-called Labyrinth, a kind of dungeon or subterranean cave, that indicates his chthonic nature. In Minoan rituals, the role of Minotaur belonged to King Minos himself, who also represented his divine father Poseidon in the Sacred Marriage with Queen Pasiphae, who appeared in the guise of a 'cow'. Theseus' role was also ambivalent, from the offering to Minotaur he turns into the latter's slayer. The ceremonies that were held in Crete as ritual games with the bull after every eight years were testing the physical strength of the ruling king. The winner in the competition became a new sacred king in the Knossos palace and personified the bull-god in the Sacred Marriage with the queen-cow. The ritual demonstrates the ambivalence of both hero and monster: only fate determines who is to be Hero, and who is the Minotaur (who will be King Minos or the sacrificial bull). This ambivalence, apparently, was a manifestation of the ancient nature of the chthonic deity, who himself gave rise to his enemy.

The tale of Ivan Bykovič, thus, retained the most archaic mythic motif, which reflected the cyclical nature of the life process and the interchangeability of its components. Perhaps this idea of ambivalence can be found in the epic story about Dobrynja and Marinka, where the hero, like Theseus, first acts as a victim offered to a chthonic deity:

"Marinka that Kaidalievna ('kaidal' - herd, drove)

As it was she has turned a hero into

That aurochs and a golden-horned one,

And then she let the hero down into the open field;

And here the hero went through the open field,

And he went as a aurochs and as golden-horned." (Hilferding № 5)

"Marina Ignatievna, the mistress of the Zmej Gorynyč,

Turned him, Dobrynja, into a chestnut aurochs.

She let him go far into the open field,

Thitherward where nine aurochs are walking,

Yes nine aurochs, nine brothers,

That Dobrynja will be the tenth aurochs for them,

For all the chieftain - golden horns!" (Kirča Danilov № 9)

“She [Marinka] turned Dobrynja into a bay-colored aurochs.
She had twenty-seven aurochs in the field,
He happened to be the thirtieth aurochs in the field.
The aurochs’ horns were made of gold,
The aurochs’ feet were made of silver,
The aurochs’ hair was made of patterned velvet.”¹⁴⁶

Thus, the legend of the Slavic youth who defeated the giant Pecheneg was formed on the basis of a whole complex of ritual and mythological concepts. The youngster, to whom the chronicler attributed the victory, is not accidentally nameless. In initiation rituals, each young man had to perform his feat in order to become a man. The winner was one of many neophytes, and this was well understood in the 10th-11th century folklore, from where the chronicler borrowed this character. Apparently, the initiation ritual was still alive at that time, and this circumstance did not allow individualizing the image of the hero, as it was with the epic heroes Ilya Murometz, Dobrynja Nikitič and Aljoša Popović.

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146. Bailey, Ivanova 1998, 101-105; Hilferding № 163.

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